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New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Holum (United States of America): The First Committee meets this year at a time of serious challenges to world security. This decade has brought remarkable achievements in arms control and non-proliferation, and they need no elaboration, for the members of this Committee have contributed greatly to their realization. Continued deep reductions in United States and Russian nuclear forces; the signing of our longest-sought and hardest-fought-for goal, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC); the considerable strengthening of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, including full-scope safeguards as a supply condition; the decisions by South Africa and several States of the former Soviet Union to abandon and forswear nuclear weapons, and of several other States to rule out the possibility of acquiring them — all of these represent major progress towards a new era in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons are further reduced and ultimately abolished.

But there are glaring exceptions to this positive trend. It is a fair assessment to say that just as the world's resistance to weapons of mass destruction has stiffened, the hardest cases have all grown worse. Indeed, if past First Committee sessions have reflected the hope born of mighty achievements, this one ought to reflect the sobering reality that our common endeavours have lost ground to make up. The First Committee at this session, I suggest, needs to concentrate especially hard on the real work at hand.

Against the advances of the past decade, the nuclear-weapon tests conducted last May by India and Pakistan are all the more deplorable and disheartening. These tests not only pose a serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime but present profound dangers on the ground. The world learned painfully along with the United States and the Soviet Union how high the risk of war becomes when ballistic missile velocities reduce attack warning to a matter of minutes. But that was for intercontinental ranges. If nuclear-capable missiles are deployed, India and Pakistan will have no minutes. Flight times will be less than reaction times, and there will be a hair trigger on nuclear war.

This year has also brought intensified concern about nuclear-weapon potential in North Korea and, most recently, the provocative launch by North Korea which passed directly over Japanese territory, raising serious concerns in Japan that are shared by its close friends and allies, including the United States.

In another tense region, the Gulf, proliferation of mass-destruction weapons also concerns the international community. Iraq's continuing resistance to United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections and Iran's development of longer-range missiles diminish international security.

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It is up to all of us to find the silver lining in these figurative mushroom clouds in South Asia and other ominous developments. By sharpening the world's focus on the dangers of proliferation, the events of this year may show the way forward, and the international response to these problems gives us some cause for hope. Within a few days of the nuclear-weapon tests that so shocked the world many key institutions and groups of nations had condemned the tests and laid out measures India and Pakistan would have to take to regain standing within the international community. The General Assembly, the permanent members of the Security Council, the Rio Group, the Security Council in resolution 1172 (1998) and 47 members of the Conference on Disarmament all delivered a clear, firm and consistent message: India and Pakistan must take concrete steps to bring their actions into line with the global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament norms.

Among the most urgent measures or benchmarks established by the international community are an end to nuclear testing and prompt signature and ratification of the CTBT without conditions; an end to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and, to that end, engagement in productive negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; restraint in the development of nuclear-capable missiles and controls on the export of sensitive materials.

The international community has also called on India and Pakistan to continue discussions to alleviate the tensions between them, including those arising in Kashmir. In our bilateral efforts with both India and Pakistan, the United States has urged the same steps.

The steadfastness and unity of the world community have yielded some progress. We regard positively the announcements by both nations' Prime Ministers to the General Assembly that their countries are prepared to adhere to the CTBT. We also welcome their agreement to engage in fissile material cut-off negotiations, which began last August in the Conference on Disarmament, and leaders of the two countries have agreed to resume a review of outstanding disputes.

Clearly, tangible progress on the international community's benchmarks will take more time. It will also take a steadfast international community. For our part, until more progress is achieved, lifting sanctions and strengthening cooperation with India and Pakistan will be difficult. At the same time, we remain committed to continuing our discussions at both the senior and expert levels.

Events in South Asia underscore the tremendous importance of efforts to enhance our common security through international agreements and norms. Some say the inadequate progress towards complete nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States justifies or explains Indian and Pakistani actions. With all respect, that is nonsense. I identify with the yearning for more progress and with disappointment that the process can be difficult and slow. But can anyone honestly believe that nuclear-weapon tests in South Asia are good for the cause of disarmament? Are more nuclear explosions and proliferation really the route to fewer nuclear weapons?

Other sceptics say that South Asian testing shows that the CTBT and the NPT are worthless. In fact, it confirms that they are essential. The problem is not the NPT or the CTBT; the problem is that, unlike most of the rest of the world, India and Pakistan have not joined. Now, in response to international appeals, both States have told the General Assembly that they will indeed join the CTBT rather than pursue continued sabre-rattling with more tests. In kind, the international community has made clear its expectation that they will also adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We must seize this moment of heightened attention to global security to strengthen this international regime. The NPT remains the cornerstone. Brazil's recent accession brings the NPT closer to universality and clearly illustrates its continued significance to ensuring global security. The year 2000 NPT Review Conference promises to provide further opportunities to strengthen this vital instrument.

Since 1992 the International Atomic Energy Agency has adopted a series of new measures to strengthen its safeguards system, most notably a Model Protocol that gives the IAEA new tool to assist in tracking the use and location of nuclear materials around the world. The United States has already signed a protocol that includes all the measures in the Model Protocol. We hope all countries will adopt such protocols to their IAEA agreements.

Even before it has entered into force the CTBT has created a nearly universal expectation that countries will not conduct nuclear test explosions. This norm helped create the climate for widespread condemnation of Indian and Pakistani testing. President Clinton is committed to securing the United States Senate's advice and consent to ratification, and we encourage such action by all other States that have not yet done so in order to bring the CTBT into force at the earliest possible time. This would cement the prohibition against nuclear tests and provide a robust verification regime to help the international community detect and deter.

The fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical multilateral step in advancing our shared nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. We should be encouraged that, in the wake of events in South Asia, all 61 members of the Conference on Disarmament agreed to begin these negotiations, which we strongly hope will resume quickly in January. The treaty would cap the amount of fissile material available for nuclear weapons globally, extend verification measures to all enrichment and reprocessing facilities and prohibit those countries that have recently halted fissile material production for weapons, including the United States, from resuming it. It would also foster the creation of a climate conducive to continued, long-term progress on reducing nuclear-weapon stockpiles and promote stability in regions where the risk of escalating arms races is greatest.

Of course, getting negotiations under way is the easy part. Important national interests are at stake. Complex technical issues will not easily be solved. We urge all States to negotiate in good faith with an eye towards completing these negotiations in a timely manner. We believe that can be done.

Nuclear weapons occupy the bulk of our attention, but we also have vitally important work ahead on other weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery and on especially destructive conventional arms. We must devote ourselves to fully implementing prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons. That means completing next year the work of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group on a compliance protocol. It also means destroying existing stocks of chemical weapons under the CWC regime.

We must do all we can to ensure that these weapons, which humanity rightly considers particularly repulsive, do not proliferate further and are not available for terrorist use. All States should cooperate with export control regimes to prevent proliferation of mass-destruction weapons and their delivery systems. States that adhere to the international non-proliferation and disarmament norms have nothing to fear from such controls. At the same time, States that possess high technology have a responsibility to prevent the proliferation of that technology to States or non-State actors that would use it to threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction.

With the Ottawa Convention entering into force next month, we applaud efforts by the Convention's supporters to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and the humanitarian crisis they cause. We share that goal. Although United States security concerns have prevented us from signing the Convention, we will do so by 2006 if we succeed in identifying and fielding suitable alternatives to our anti-personnel and anti-tank landmine systems. Meanwhile, the United States believes that it is important for the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate an anti-personnel landmine transfer ban to help dry up the supply of anti-personnel landmines from States not party to the Convention.

A serious challenge to all nations and one of growing international interest — and rightly so — is to restrict and regulate the flow of small arms. Secretary of State Albright has recently underscored United States support for a number of initiatives to address this problem. She has stressed the importance of responsible arms transfer practices that are effective worldwide, to be negotiated under United Nations auspices based on the pathbreaking Convention against illicit trafficking negotiated by the Organization of American States. We should set the year 2000 as a target date to conclude those talks, as well as to restrict the export of shoulder-fired missiles. Secretary Albright also called for an international centre to collect and share information on arms transfers.

Especially this year, as we take up these many challenges, we should reject efforts to change the subject. It may be natural to want to focus on the weapons and policies of the other guy, and doubtless it is natural to want to place the main burden on the biggest guys. The nuclear-weapon States' work towards nuclear disarmament is, of course, a critical piece of the picture, but it is far from the entire canvas, and it must not be used to excuse inaction or justify wholly unacceptable action by others.

The challenge to strengthen global security is put before us all. Let me assure the Committee that the United States remains committed to nuclear disarmament, pursuant to article VI of the NPT. Over the past decade the United States has eliminated more than 10,000 nuclear weapons from its military arsenals, along with more than 1,700 missile-launchers and bombers, under the INF and START I Treaties. We have not conducted a nuclear-weapon test explosion since 1992, we ceased the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons many years ago and we have removed more than 200 tons of fissile material from our military stockpile.

The United States and the Russian Federation together have deactivated or eliminated more than 18,000 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads. At last year's Helsinki summit President Clinton and President Yeltsin agreed that the next step in strategic arms control would take us to a cumulative 80 per cent reduction from cold-war peaks of deployed weapons, and we are working jointly to remove and make unsuitable for weapons large quantities of fissile material. At the recent Moscow summit Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed on principles for the disposition by each country of approximately 50 metric tons of plutonium released from defence programmes. We are both already blending down highly enriched uranium (HEU) from our defence programmes for use as power reactor fuel.

Although not participants in formal negotiations on reductions of nuclear arms, the United Kingdom and France have unilaterally eliminated entire classes of nuclear weapons and substantially reduced the overall levels of their nuclear forces.

What is most significant is what these reductions say about the lessened role of nuclear weapons in world affairs. Who can now believe that the great Powers of the future will be defined as those possessing nuclear weapons? Surely not the courageous leaders of South Africa, who abandoned their nuclear-weapons programme in the recognition that their country would be more secure by supporting and adhering to global non-proliferation norms. Surely not Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which chose the status of non-nuclear-weapon States and returned all nuclear weapons not destroyed on their soil to Russia. Surely not Germany and Japan, the two economic giants and leading candidates for permanent membership in the Security Council, which decided it was not in their interest to use their technical capabilities to develop nuclear weapons, and joined the NPT in the 1970s. Surely not the 182 non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, which decided that they could maintain their security — and prestige, for that matter — far better by agreeing to forswear nuclear weapons than by engaging in a costly and dangerous effort to acquire them.

The reduced role of nuclear weapons can also be seen in the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which now cover about a hundred countries. If South Asia became a nuclear-weapon-free zone, India and Pakistan could seek the same legally binding assurances nuclear-weapon States now extend to Latin America and the Caribbean and shortly will provide to the States of the South Pacific and the African continent.

The choice is clear to us all. We can continue on the road towards further strengthening the global non-proliferation regime and reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, or we can turn away and invite the perils of nuclear proliferation and a nuclear-arms race. The vast majority of the international community has chosen the first course. The United States will make its contribution to sustaining the world's momentum in that same direction. We have a responsibility to do so. We hope countries that took a different path are rethinking their decisions. With a new awareness of the stakes, let us renew our determination, redouble our efforts and move all nations towards the destination of a safer world.

Ms. Molaroni (San Marino): I should like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and in thanking your predecessor for the excellent work he carried out last year. We all know that this mandate is an important and politically complex one. It needs a good dose of expertise, high diplomacy and, most of all, farsightedness, because in the field of disarmament issues have to be faced with accuracy and depth, and the results are visible only in the long or very long run.

My delegation has been following the work of this important Committee with particular attention. My country's policy on disarmament is based on promoting principles that we believe to be just and rational, completely free from conflicts of interest, and in the ultimate conviction that the only and sure result of wars is destruction.

I was told some time ago that countries like mine should stop interfering on the international scene and propagandizing useless ethical principles and ideals, and that the international scenario is based only on the economic interests of some countries. But everybody knows that if one does not tend to the ideal one will never reach the best. Maybe, thanks to those very countries that are free from conflicts of political and economic interest, the international community will guarantee the common good, avoiding allowing wrong or misguided interests to lead us to the end.

Although at a first glance at the international environment it might seem that the Republic of San Marino had ratified a relatively small number of treaties, it must not be forgotten that our modern international political life is quite young and that our country only recently entered the big international organizations.

Our Republic has a strong and deep commitment to international disarmament and to the total elimination of existing nuclear armaments. We believe that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, even if only in self defence, is a totally shortsighted and irresponsible answer. A chain reaction based on retaliation is a danger for humanity as a whole. We welcome the establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which will certainly play an important role in international disarmament. We also welcome the treaties and conventions created in recent years, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), in 1993; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), in 1996, and the subsequent creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). We hope that more and more countries will ratify them. They have not yet achieved the results the international community expected. In addition, it seems that treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are not sufficient to curb the abuse of such weapons.

We feel that the reason for the nuclear arms race has changed. It is no longer merely an instrument for affirming a dangerous military supremacy, but is a way to acquire status, nationally and internationally. Such status could be achieved in other ways, using the same economic resources in other fields.

Recent nuclear tests, the latest in a long series that my Government condemns in the Asian region, opened a new and worrying chapter of the nuclear era, a chapter that seems to be internationally uncontrollable.

My country is committed to greater transparency in armaments, the only point of departure for achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. For this reason, last year we supported the draft resolution submitted by Japan, Iceland and the European Union, entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", which was adopted as resolution 52/38 K.

Furthermore, we are interested in a new draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.48) put forward by Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden and South Africa, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", emanating from the joint declaration by those countries, principally because we are aware of the need for a concrete change in the international nuclear disarmament agenda.

We have always supported the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice holding that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal, that negotiations for complete nuclear disarmament must be carried on in good faith under international control, and that the production, testing, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons are forbidden. The relevant resolution (resolution 52/38 O) adopted last year, of which San Marino was a sponsor, is in our opinion the basis for denuclearization. Good faith must guide the work of the Committee to reach a result worth working for.

For that reason, my country will support any proposal designed to create nuclear-weapon-free zones. The establishment of such zones on the basis of agreements freely concluded between interested States — such as the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok and the Antarctic Treaty — is an important contribution towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Today there are up to 114 States signatories of these Treaties, and they cover more than 50 per cent of the planet.

In the same context, I should like to mention here the courageous proposal of the Permanent Representative of Mongolia on the establishment of a single nuclear-weapon-free State. Such self-declaration should be recognized by the international community and given the importance, official status and inviolability it deserves.

The achievement of real nuclear disarmament requires the commitment of us all. Nuclear States or States with nuclear capabilities should reduce their arsenals with a view to their total elimination. States producing nuclear-weapon components should convert their production. Nuclear-weapon-free States should monitor the compliance of all countries with the international treaties on the subject.

The Republic of San Marino has been patiently following, step by step, the process that will eventually lead to general and complete disarmament. The Republic of San Marino considers that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be useful in promoting the awareness of the international community and in enhancing momentum.

San Marino was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel

Mines and on Their Destruction and has always supported resolutions in favour of demining and of the mobilization of as many countries as possible to assist in the process. We cherish the fact that the 1997 treaty on the elimination of landmines — the Ottawa Convention — will finally enter into force in March 1999, following its ratification by the fortieth country, Mozambique, last September. We welcome Mozambique's offer to host the first meeting of the States parties. We also congratulate all the other countries that joined the treaty after Mozambique, and we encourage those that have not yet done so to ratify soon. We applaud Canada and Norway for promoting this initiative.

We also followed with interest the press conference organized by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines on 1 October 1998, on the occasion of the fortieth ratification of the Ottawa Treaty and its entry into force. We should like to recall and support the following words of Ms. Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General, at that press conference:

> "The fight against landmines is a priority for the United Nations."

In addition, San Marino is satisfied with the importance given to the promotion of respect for environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of disarmament agreements and in arms control. My country would also like to appeal to all countries with mine-producing industries to convert their production and in this way to help the international community to free itself from this nefarious legacy of war.

Since San Marino joined the United Nations as a full Member in 1992 it has always co-sponsored all resolutions relating to the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. It has been a member of the Mediterranean Conference since 1975 and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) since 1994.

We are convinced that a lot can be done at a regional level, and this was confirmed by the statements my delegation heard on 26 September at the briefing organized by the Governments of Canada and Norway — an informative session at ministerial level on small arms and light weapons — and at the seminar that followed. My delegation attended both events with great interest. The large attendance was reassuring. We view as particularly interesting and noteworthy the several programmes at regional and national levels to limit the supply of, demand for, traffic in and use of small arms and light weapons. We recognize the danger these arms pose to a country's political stability.

Lastly, we should like to emphasize the absolute merit of the concept of total transparency in armaments, which is the point of departure for preventing their wrong use. Last year we voted in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Transparency in armaments", which became resolution 52/38 R. San Marino supports the German position expressed in the working paper (A/CN.10/194) on "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". The paper encourages the creation of regional arms registers focusing in particular on small arms and light weapons and agreements aiming at the prevention and reduction of the excessive accumulation of armaments.

San Marino, in its 16 centuries of history, has not produced or traded in armaments. It does not have an army and it has never declared war, nor has it ever taken part in one. We believe San Marino to be living proof that peace and respect among States is effectively possible.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to congratulate the other officers of the Committee on their election. I am confident that with your wide experience you will guide our work towards a successful conclusion, and to this end I assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation. Allow me also to extend our most sincere appreciation to Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana for his vigilance in steering our work at the last session of the General Assembly.

The First Committee meets today in the aftermath of serious developments in the international arena that pertain directly to the field of disarmament. These developments, serious as they are, should be properly reflected upon and carefully analysed in order that we may remain focused on our clear and ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, better concentrate our attention on the best interests of the international community and live up to our common determination, as reflected in the very first words of the United Nations Charter:

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

I always find it pertinent to re-emphasize the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament. Those priorities were clearly outlined in the 1978 Final

Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in the Programme of Action contained therein, where nuclear disarmament was accorded the utmost and highest priority, followed by disarmament of other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Those priorities should be observed until we decide otherwise through a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, whose convening should not be held hostage to the arrogant consent of one or the extravagant ambitions of another.

The end of the cold war created a rare window of opportunity and generated much hope that the international community would finally be able to spare the world from the most destabilizing of military doctrines ever, which were based on the retention of nuclear arsenals, and that it would consequently make a nuclear-weapon-free world a foreseeable reality. The findings of the Canberra Commission are a guiding torch that makes it abundantly clear to those who persist in upholding those doctrines that their continued policies have been proved to be among the greatest deceptions of all time. The report of the Canberra Commission states:

> "Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them."

The Canberra Commission issued a clear warning, but the regrettable fact is that no one has listened. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia are unequivocal testimony to that effect.

The immense destructive character of nuclear weapons, in any sensible, logical or reasonable view, leads concerned thinkers to believe that that horrific character should of itself generate momentum for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The attainment of the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is indispensable, and the rationale of our resolve is self-evident. The mere existence of nuclear weapons constitutes in itself a serious threat to international peace and security. It is ironic, however, that the efforts of the international community have not yielded significant results, despite a stream of General Assembly resolutions, references in international legal instruments — most notably in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the findings of the Canberra Commission, the determined contributions of non-governmental organizations and various other worldwide initiatives. The common factor is that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

Indeed, several initiatives have been launched. Allow me to refer here to the joint declaration of eight States, among which Egypt played an active role, entitled, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". The eight Foreign Ministers met in New York last month and reaffirmed their intention to introduce a follow-up draft resolution at the current session of the General Assembly. We are encouraged by the considerable support we have already received, and we hope that the draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.48), which reflects the repeated calls of the international community for urgent action on the important issue of nuclear disarmament, will enjoy overwhelming support.

The recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban reiterated its call upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as a highest priority, an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations in 1998 on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapons convention, within a specific time-frame. In this context, Egypt reaffirms the continued validity of the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in August 1996 by 28 of the Movement's members. The programme of action is intended to rectify the lacunae in explicit commitments relating to nuclear disarmament, especially on the part of the nuclear-weapon States.

The establishment within the Conference on Disarmament, under its agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament," of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is a step, albeit modest, in the right direction. The proposed convention, in our view, must entail both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

Egypt regrets the continued absence of genuine political will among the nuclear-weapon States to embark on a serious course of multilateral negotiations leading to the full and complete implementation of the provisions of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which would pave the way to the attainment of the goal of nuclear disarmament. We strongly believe that such a position, particularly in the aftermath of the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, not only contravenes their obligations under article VI but also undermines the whole purpose of the non-proliferation regime, namely, the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons as a step towards their complete elimination.

The series of nuclear tests recently conducted in South Asia has definitely created a new reality, which has to be firmly addressed by the international community. Those tests have clearly demonstrated that the legal framework established by both the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) have proved inadequate to safeguard, by themselves, the global non-proliferation regime. The international community has to address the issue at both the global and the regional levels pending the attainment of the objective of general and complete disarmament.

At the global level, we reaffirm the need for all States, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to work diligently and faithfully towards achieving the total elimination of, and a universal ban on, nuclear weapons as well as a total ban on fissile material, including the elimination of all stockpiles.

Equally, special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. A paramount step in this direction is to achieve adherence to the Treaty by all States, without any exception. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon-capable States should, as a general rule, issue unequivocal declarations renouncing and reversing their military nuclear programmes, accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without further delay and take subsequent necessary measures stemming from their Treaty obligations. Similarly, they should sign and ratify the CTBT.

Another step at the global level is to achieve international recognition that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security. As a matter of principle, Egypt strongly believes that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons could provide genuine security for all States. However, in the interim, we take note of the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. The Ad Hoc Committee is entrusted with the task of negotiating universal, unconditional and legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Security Council also has a responsibility to discharge, namely, that of adequately safeguarding the security of Member States. The Council should adopt a new resolution which would be of a more comprehensive nature and which would surpass the limited scope of the provisions of resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995). The new resolution should provide for measures that would ensure comprehensive protection and adequate assistance, thus encompassing the elements of credibility and deterrence. Those measures should be provided with a trigger mechanism that would enable the Security Council to intervene swiftly through a prior determination by the Council that any threat or use of nuclear weapons would in itself constitute a threat to international peace and security in accordance with the provisions of Article 39 of the United Nations Charter. Thus, the Council could speedily and automatically embark on the measures necessary to respond to the grave magnitude of a nuclear threat through the collective security system envisaged in the Charter.

At the regional level, the existing Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the Antarctic Treaty, have undoubtedly contributed to the exclusion of nuclear weapons from the entire southern hemisphere. The further pursuit of efforts to establish such zones, especially in regions of tension such as the Middle East and South Asia, should now be an urgent priority for the international community, to be pursued with vigour and determination.

We note with deep regret the failure of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of States parties to the NPT recently held in Geneva. Particularly dismaying is the stance of one delegation which is insisting on supporting and upholding the ambiguous nuclear policies, programmes and ambitions of a non-party to the NPT.

It is Egypt's firm intention to work as faithfully as possible towards a successful outcome of the forthcoming Review Conference and to take an active part in steering the NPT ship through the current turbulent tides and blustery winds to safe shores and warm shelter. However, if that policy persists, there will certainly be strongly voiced serious doubts as to the credibility of the indefinite Treaty. It is our conviction that sincere and consolidated efforts should be geared to the issuance by the Review Conference of an integral consensus document, a document that would enhance the implementation of all NPT provisions, a document that would build constructively on the consensus results of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which included a package of three decisions and a resolution on the Middle East. The Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement called upon the Review Conference to establish a body subsidiary to its Main Committee II to consider and recommend proposals for the implementation of the resolution. We fully endorse that call.

I now turn to the Middle East. Since 1974 the First Committee and the General Assembly have been adopting annually a resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Since before 1974 nuclear-weapon-free zones have mushroomed worldwide, in Latin America, the South Pacific, South East Asia and Africa, and concrete work is being carried out to establish yet another zone in Central Asia. The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones itself is ever evolving. Mongolia is active in promoting the concept of a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone. Belarus and others are also active in advancing a new concept of a nuclear-weapon-free space. Brazil, with the support of a large majority, successfully took the lead two years ago in rallying support for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. These are all developments which Egypt warmly welcomes.

Regrettably, no such claim can be made for the Middle East. For over 17 years now, the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone draft resolution has been adopted unanimously, a record that attests to the overwhelming support for this objective. However, the plain truth is that the objective eludes us. No concrete measures, no working meetings and no serious talks have yet been held, formally or informally, among regional parties with a view to putting into practice what all of us here seem to aspire to.

Despite its frustration over the stagnation which characterizes the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone issue, Egypt firmly supports the implementation of the resolution that this body annually adopts. Nevertheless, our endorsement of that resolution must not be misconstrued or interpreted as tacit support for the unfortunate stagnation which has characterized this issue for too long now.

To the contrary, Egypt continues to be committed to the earliest establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and, indeed, of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In a region such as the Middle East, such a zone must be looked upon not as an a posteriori peace dividend but as an essential confidence-building step facilitating and leading the way towards a just, comprehensive, stable and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Only one country in the Middle East is widely suspected of possessing a significant arsenal of nuclear weapons. Only one country in the Middle East operates unsafeguarded nuclear installations and facilities. Only one country in the Middle East refuses to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or even to discuss the nuclear issue. That country, of course, is Israel. Let us not be deluded. It is Israel which has singled itself out, and no one else. Nonetheless, the reaction of the international community to this dangerous and provocative situation, compared to its reaction to other situations, remains mitigated at best.

Double standards in the pursuit of the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation are dangerous and counterproductive. The international community should clearly choose. Either it is or it is not against the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the world. There is no "in between," there are no grey areas, there are no mitigating circumstances.

We fail to understand how certain countries can severely condemn and take strong action against one proliferator while all but condoning the actions of another. We also fail to understand how a country can claim to be seeking a just peace in the Middle East while it insists on maintaining its ability to annihilate its neighbours. Further, we fail to understand how major sponsors of clear draft resolutions can renege on their explicit commitments.

The draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.21) on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is in fact understated. The truth of the matter is that we should not continue complacently to voice concerns over a risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. If this risk situation is not quickly redressed, the draft resolution might one day come to be entitled "The risk of further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East". This is the situation Egypt is striving to avoid.

The argumentation employed by Israel in attempting to justify its erroneous position against adherence to the NPT and against placing all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards is nothing but a pretext to shield its nuclear policies, programmes and ambitions. They constitute serious obstacles that undermine the establishment of the zone and impair sincere regional and extra-regional efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

This attitude on the part of Israel not only undermines the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone but also induces a similar position on the part of many States in the region vis-à-vis other international instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, most notably the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The rationale is clear and simple: security cannot be divided among various types of weapons of mass destruction, on the one hand, and between weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, on the other. The initiative launched by President Hosni Mubarak in April 1990 to establish a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which was later encompassed in his broader initiative in June 1998 to hold an international conference with a view to achieving a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, carries a lot of weight in this regard.

Egypt supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building mechanism, not as an arms control mechanism. We are disappointed, however, at the outcome of the latest meetings of the Panel of Governmental Experts, not only because they failed to broaden the scope of the Register to cover military holdings and procurement through national production, but also because they failed to include additional categories of weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, transparency in weapons of mass destruction is as important as, if not more important than, transparency with regard to conventional weapons. Again, security is indivisible. It is obvious that those who are against extending the same treatment to weapons of mass destruction are the same ones who are aggressively seeking to enhance transparency in conventional weapons at any cost. They are clearly motivated by the umbrellas and security arrangements that shelter them. The year 2000 Panel of Governmental Experts should by no means be bound by a renewed vague assignment. On the contrary, they should be given a concrete mandate which will enable them to overcome the blatant deficiencies that cripple the normal functioning of the United Nations Register in its present form.

Next I turn to the landmines issue, on which our position is very well known. Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with over 22.7 million landmines planted in its soil by regional and extra-regional belligerents during various international and regional conflicts. In that light, I should like to restate Egypt's views on how to approach the landmine problem comprehensively. Regrettably, the Ottawa Convention has a vacuum in this regard owing to its severe deficiencies and serious loopholes. We believe that measures aimed at curbing mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared to mine clearance in affected countries that are unable to achieve this objective on their own. The provision of technical and financial support and the transfer of the necessary advanced technology to enable those States to overcome this tragic legacy is of paramount importance.

In conclusion, I should like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations system in the field of disarmament. This collective endeavour must strive towards optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, without prejudice to their assigned mandates, rules of procedure and working methods, with a view to focusing international efforts on the pursuit of general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the current session. I am confident that, given your vast experience and outstanding diplomatic skills, you will guide the Committee to success. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with you and make our own contributions to the successful conclusion of the Committee's work. I also wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Nkgowe for his excellent work as Chairman of the First Committee at the last session.

With the end of the cold war, the trend towards multipolarity is gaining momentum, and the international situation as a whole is moving towards relaxation. Peace and development are the two main themes of the times. Against such a backdrop, some further progress has been achieved over the past year in international arms control and disarmament. However, 1998 has been far from tranquil. In disregard of the strong opposition of the international community, a certain country conducted nuclear tests in an attempt to gain regional hegemony and so-called great Power status. Such acts have posed a serious threat to the peace, security and stability of the region and the world as a whole and have caused a major setback in international arms control and disarmament efforts.

The nuclear tests conducted by India were nothing but a show of outrageous contempt for, and a heavy blow to, the widely supported international nuclear-non-proliferation regime. Subsequently, Pakistan was forced to respond with its own nuclear tests. The international community reacted quickly and strongly. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1172 (1998), denying India and Pakistan the status of nuclear-weapon States and urging them to stop their nuclear-weapon development programmes and to accede without delay and without conditions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Resolution 1172 (1998) reflects the trend and the common will of the international community and should be fully implemented. It has sent a clear signal to the whole world that the international community is opposed to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan and that the attempt to acquire so-called great Power status through such tests will go nowhere. We call upon India and Pakistan, and especially on the initiator of these nuclear tests, to take measures as soon as possible to meet the various requirements set forth in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

Settlement of the Kashmir issue is one of the key elements that will help bring peace and security to South Asia. The international community should move to help and to facilitate a peaceful and just resolution.

The history of more than a century has demonstrated that security is mutual. A country cannot enjoy genuine security unless it bases its own security on the common security of all countries. Security should be underpinned by mutual trust and common interest among States. After two world wars and decades of the cold war, interdependence among States should have become a well acknowledged understanding shared by the whole of the international community. Regrettably, however, although the cold war is over, the cold-war mentality dies hard. The nuclear tests in South Asia are one case in point. People are also concerned that, rather than dissolving with the end of the cold war, some military blocs and alliances established in that era are constantly expanding and gaining strength. A few countries, backed by their economic and technological superiority, are intensifying their efforts to develop sophisticated weapons that undermine the global strategic balance and stability. They are also frequently resorting to the use or threat of the use of force in international affairs. Such a practice of seeking one's own security at the expense of the security of others is detrimental to the further relaxation of international tension and will have a negative impact on international arms control and disarmament efforts.

Summing up past experience and lessons and preparing ourselves for future opportunities and challenges, we need to cultivate a new concept of security and seek new ways to maintain peace. The Chinese delegation believes that relations between States should be based on the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. This is the political basis and prerequisite for regional and international security. The practical way to maintain peace and security is to enhance mutual understanding and trust among countries through dialogue and cooperation and to undertake to resolve their differences and disputes through peaceful means. Economic development and common prosperity constitute the material bases of regional and global security. Now that international tensions are easing, a country should channel its limited resources to economic and social development so as to benefit its own people and, at the same time, provide guarantees for national security and that of the region as a whole.

The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons is the common aspiration of mankind. We fully understand the wish of the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States for general and complete nuclear disarmament and their concern over the slow pace of this process. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not imply that the nuclear-weapon States can possess nuclear weapons for ever. The nuclear-weapon States should intensify their eforts to fulfil the obligations set forth in article VI of the NPT. We call upon the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals to implement their existing bilateral agreements on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible and, further, drastically to reduce their nuclear arsenals. This will not only have a positive impact on international peace and security but will also create favourable conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to participate in the nuclear disarmament process at an early date. I wish to point out here that the issue of nuclear disarmament should not be used by any country as an excuse for conducting nuclear tests. Such an act would only hamper the nuclear disarmament process.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China never participates in the nuclear arms race, nor has it ever evaded its responsibility for nuclear disarmament. We have always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and we have unilaterally and unconditionally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. We call for an early conclusion of international legal instruments to this end. China is the only nuclear-weapon State that has made those commitments. Our commitments are sincere. China's limited nuclear force and its related policies have demonstrated that its nuclear weapons constitute no threat to any other country. That position of

China is of great significance in the prevention of nuclear war and has played a positive role in promoting the nuclear disarmament process and in reducing the risk of nuclear-weapons proliferation. This is a major contribution that we have made in our own way towards the realization of the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also call for the early conclusion of a convention banning nuclear weapons. Reductions can be achieved gradually, through appropriate steps and phases, from the larger arsenals to smaller ones, until the ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament is accomplished, thus freeing mankind from the menace of nuclear war. A nuclear-weapon-free world is a lofty objective to be pursued by several generations. We are ready to join hands with other countries in striving for its early realization.

Thanks to the joint efforts of all the parties concerned, the Conference on Disarmament has over the past two years entered a new phase. Last August the Ad Hoc Committee on the fissile-material cut-off treaty was established. China is in favour of the early negotiation and conclusion of a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Such a convention, in our view, will be important for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament.

The Chinese Government's basic position on the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations can be summarized as follows. First, the scope of the convention, as set forth in the relevant resolution of the General Assembly and the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in 1995, as contained in the Shannon Report, should be strictly adhered to, and should be the prohibition of production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Secondly, the convention's verification system should be formulated in accordance with the convention's scope and should not copy that of other treaties. Efforts should be made to ensure the effectiveness of the verification system and at the same time to reduce verification's cost as much as possible. Thirdly, the convention should enter into force after all countries with nuclear capabilities have ratified it. This will help to enhance the universality of the convention and guarantee that no country's security will be compromised.

Resolution 52/37, adopted by the General Assembly at its last session, calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and reaffirms that negotiations for the conclusion of an international agreement or agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space remain a priority task so as to ensure that the exploration and exploitation of outer space are solely for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of humanity. This demonstrates the great importance that the international community attaches to the prevention of the weaponization of outer space.

People are concerned that activities in developing and testing outer space weapons systems have intensified in recent years. The weapons systems under research vary in form. Some are deployed entirely in outer space or are targeted at objects in outer space, while others are based in outer space to provide target information or guidance for ground-weapon systems. As a consequence of such activities, outer space will be turned into a weapons base and battlefield, and regional and global strategic stability will be undermined.

Under such circumstances, the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, should re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space to complement the existing legal instruments. We call upon the countries concerned to work together to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament plays its due role in this regard.

China has always supported international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As a State party to the NPT, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), China has faithfully honoured its treaty obligations and has imposed strict controls on the export of sensitive items and their production technologies and equipment. Over the past two years the Chinese Government has promulgated regulations on the supervision and control of chemicals, regulations on nuclear export control and regulations on the control of the export of dual-use nuclear materials and related technology. These regulations have further improved China's export control regime and placed it under legal supervision. Moreover, China also applies strict controls to the transfer of conventional military equipment and related technologies, and issued regulations on the control of the export of military products in October 1997.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of science and technology are two sides of the same coin. They should complement rather than exclude each other. The Chinese Government maintains that international non-proliferation efforts should be fair and rational and that no double standards should be applied under which non-proliferation is used as a pretext to infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of other countries. Only in that way, and when accompanied by the promotion of international economic and scientific cooperation and exchanges, can international non-proliferation efforts be more effective.

Negotiations on the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention have been going on in an intense but orderly manner since 1995. Not long ago, Ministers of some of the States parties to the BWC held a meeting in New York and issued a joint statement calling for the early conclusion of negotiations on the protocol. This is a strong political impetus to those important negotiations.

China has always been in favour of the creation of practical and feasible verification mechanisms for the BWC and has been actively promoting international cooperation in the field of biotechnology. In fact, in its statement upon acceding to the BWC in 1984 China pointed out that lack of effective verification measures was a defect of the Convention and should be corrected in due course. With regard to verification of the Convention, China is of the view that, while ensuring the effectiveness of verification measures, it is important to prevent the abuse of verification to avoid unnecessary interference with the normal production, scientific research and trade of the States parties and to protect their legitimate commercial and security confidentiality. China supports efforts to push the negotiations on the protocol to an early conclusion. However, good wishes should aim at fine results. The fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention still has over a hundred unresolved problems since entering into force more than a year ago has taught us that it is unwise simply to pursue speedy negotiations and to disregard the quality of the results achieved. The key is to negotiate a good protocol. China is ready to make concerted efforts with other countries to achieve this goal.

On 29 August 1998 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China ratified the amended landmine Protocol and the newly annexed Protocol on blinding laser weapons to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). China will formally deposit its instruments of ratification of those two Protocols with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

China is in favour of imposing proper and reasonable control on landmines so as to protect innocent civilians from injuries caused by those weapons. China believes that while we are perfecting relevant international laws to impose strict control on the use and transfer of landmines the most pressing issue at present is to assist mine-affected countries to remove remaining mines that still threaten civilian lives. We have noted with relief that in recent years many countries have been generous in this regard and are drawing up and implementing a series of assistance plans. During his visit to Canada last November, President Jiang Zemin declared that China would actively participate in international mine-clearance efforts. This year many places in China have been hit by the worst flooding of the century and have suffered enormous economic losses. The Chinese Government has spent a huge amount of money on fighting the floods and on disaster relief. Despite that, the Chinese Government still decided to contribute $100,000 this year to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, which will be earmarked for demining activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In cooperation with relevant United Nations Departments, China will host two training courses in mine clearance in the next two years. Mine-clearance experts from the Chinese military will provide technical training to students from mine-affected countries. In addition, China will provide mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment to those countries.

The issue of small arms has increasingly caught the attention of the international community in recent years. Because of their various concerns, many countries and international organizations are exploring effective means to address the issue. Some countries have reached regional arrangements or have formulated unified policies for this purpose. It should be noted that small arms are not the root cause of regional turmoil and conflicts. All Governments are obligated to prevent the indiscriminate killing and injuring of civilians by small arms, but they also have the right to possess small arms for the purpose of national defence. Given the complexity of the issue, it is impossible to expect a simple solution. To treat both the root and the symptoms of the problem, it is necessary to look for solutions tailored to the different characteristics of each region and the varying natures of problems.

The United Nations has done a great deal of work in tackling the issue of small arms. China supports an active role for the United Nations in this regard, and has sent governmental experts to participate in the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. The plan of Coordinated Action on Small Arms recently issued by the United Nations Department for

Disarmament Affairs contains many ideas and objectives that are worth studying. In addition, the United Nations Committee on Crime Prevention and Control has also made contributions to strengthening the control of small arms from the perspective of the prevention of transnational organized crime. The Chinese delegation is of the view that it is necessary for the United Nations to increase its efforts to mobilize the political will of international organizations and all countries to pool the strength of their experts so that international efforts to tackle the issue of small arms are conducted in a practical, coordinated and effective manner.

Apart from the formulation of treaties, the work of international arms control and disarmament also includes the implementation of treaties. Implementation is not only part and parcel of that work, but also its ultimate objective. We have noted with regret that some treaties are still far from being universal and that, while having acceded to the treaties, certain great Powers are using various excuses to evade their treaty obligations. This has seriously compromised the effectiveness of the treaties. The international community, therefore, should attach great importance to, and strive to facilitate the implementation of, existing international arms control and disarmament treaties so that they are able to play their due role in promoting the process of international arms control and disarmament.

A new century and a new millennium are coming. What kind of a world are we going to bring into the next century and millennium? That is a question that everyone who is concerned about the future of mankind should consider seriously. A peaceful, stable and prosperous world is in the interests of all countries; at the same time, it requires the joint efforts of all countries. The Chinese Government and people are ready to make unremitting efforts, together with the international community, to create a better future for mankind.

Mr. Pawar (India): The Indian delegation extends to you, Sir, its sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that with your vast diplomatic skills and experience you will be able to steer the work of the Committee to a fruitful outcome, to which end my delegation pledges its full cooperation with you.

While I shall be highlighting some of the main elements of my statement, I would request that its full text, which is being circulated to delegations, be fully reflected in the Committee's record.

The international security and disarmament agenda remains burdened with a flawed security paradigm constructed during the cold-war years. Clearly, this security paradigm is in need of replacement with one that ensures the achievement of the objectives of international peace and security along with equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament.

The failure of the international community to come to grips with the threat posed by nuclear weapons is due to the drawbacks in the main legal instrument that was designed to deal with nuclear weapons, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While India remains committed to the goals of a global non-proliferation regime, events have only served to confirm the shortcomings of the NPT.

The non-discriminatory international Conventions prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, respectively, were based on a devaluation of the military utility of such weapons and on the belief that, rather than partial and discriminatory arms control, the interests of the international security are better served by their complete prohibition and elimination. Disarmament was the chosen path, and the dividends are there for all to see.

The START process seems to be at a standstill. The initial promise of deep, continuous and irreversible reductions in strategic nuclear forces held out by the positive post-cold-war climate appears to be fading.

Doctrines of first use of nuclear weapons and the substantial numbers of such weapons on hair-trigger alert pose unacceptable risks, including that of the accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons. India proposes to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", and we hope that that initiative will receive widespread support.

Several distinguished institutions, including several non-governmental organizations, the media and other voices from civil society the world over, have supported the call for a world order based on the principles of equal and legitimate security for all, in the conviction that it is both essential and possible to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement accepted India's proposal that an international conference be held, preferably in 1999, with the objective of arriving at an agreement before the end of this millennium on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, addressing the General Assembly on 24 September 1998, called upon all members of the international community, and particularly the other nuclear-weapon States, to join in this endeavour. There is no dilution of India's commitment to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. I should like to remind the Committee that in 1988, at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, proposed an action plan for a world free of nuclear weapons, calling on the international community immediately to undertake negotiations with a view to adopting a time-bound action programme to usher in a world order free of nuclear weapons and rooted in non-violence.

The Committee is aware of the circumstances that led to India's standing aside from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. That decision, taken on the basis of national consensus, was governed by various considerations, some of which have been addressed through the limited series of five underground nuclear tests conducted by India on 11 and 13 May 1998. These tests were conducted as a measured response to the deteriorating security environment and were not in violation of any legal obligation entered into by India. Thereafter India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground test explosions, thus already accepting the basic obligation of the CTBT.

As noted in its annual report, the Conference on Disarmament agreed to establish this year an An Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty banning the the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We are aware that when the Conference on Disarmament is able successfully to negotiate such a treaty it will only be a partial measure and will not eliminate existing nuclear arsenals. India's participation in these negotiations will be to ensure that the treaty is non-discriminatory and is consistent with India's security interests.

The agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament on an Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material was made possible by the flexibility of a large group of delegations whose highest priority remains the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This flexibility should not be misread. As in previous years, India will be sponsoring, with other Member States, a draft resolution on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

The convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons can form the bedrock for negative security assurances that are comprehensive, legally binding and irreversible. We welcomed the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances in the Conference on Disarmament this year, and we look forward to the advancement next year of the useful work done by this Ad Hoc Committee.

We have consistently maintained that nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot do justice to the wide variety of concerns arising from the global nature of the threat posed by nuclear weapons. However, we respect the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in submitting the report entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament" (A/53/202). With a view to carrying forward consideration of this subject at a time marked by the growing appetites of the military doctrines of major Powers for ever more advanced applications of science and technology for military purposes, India is proposing, along with co-sponsors that have lent invaluable support, a draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.15) on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament.

We support the early commencement of negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate instrument that would, as a first step, ensure the non-weaponization of space while preserving the use of space — the common heritage of mankind — for the full range of peaceful and development activities.

India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. This objective can be achieved through a phased approach that enjoys international consensus and by addressing humanitarian concerns and the legitimate defence requirements of States.

We have expressed our concern regarding the continuing transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where the illicit trade in such weapons leads to diversion to non-State entities, fuelling strife and terrorism. The recommendations received last year from the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms deserve our continuing attention, with a view to taking concrete steps to fight this menace.

The process of injecting greater transparency into the global arms trade would contribute to confidence and deserves our support. We believe that further consolidation and universalization of the Register is necessary to realize its full potential, at which point we will be in a better position to assess to what extent and in which direction the process can be carried forward.

At the Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the need to continue to press for further steps leading to the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), with the participation of all States Members of the United Nations, as well as the need for SSOD IV to review and assess the implementation of the first such session. We believe that other initiatives, especially on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament, would complement as well as contribute to the success of SSOD IV when it is convened.

We have noted with satisfaction that agreement was possible regarding the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee, as well as the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): Allow me, Sir, to associate myself with the congratulations already addressed to you on your election to the honourable and responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee. In view of your wealth of experience, we hope to work fruitfully and successfully under your guidance in the search for mutually acceptable decisions on the countless issues of disarmament and international security considered in the Committee. I should also like to express gratitude to your predecessor, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Botswana, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe, for his successful contribution to the work of the Committee at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all delegations for the great honour done to my country and to me by electing me to the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee.

Your statement, Sir, and the statement of the Secretary-General at the opening of the general debate in the First Committee noted certain achievements in recent years in the sphere of disarmament at both the global and the regional levels. There are grounds for satisfaction at the increase in the number of States which have acceded to the most important treaties and agreements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC).

At the same time, as was noted in your opening remarks, Sir, and in the statements of many of our colleagues, we must intensify still further our efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to achieve progress on disarmament issues.

A priority in the field of disarmament is to strengthen the nuclear-non-proliferation regime, the basis of which is comprised of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the decisions and resolutions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. Kazakhstan attaches prime importance to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and ensuring the universal nature of the Treaty. We express the hope that the 2000 Review Conference will be marked by successful results, and we are ready to make our contribution to the preparations for the Conference and to the review process of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Kazakhstan, as a State which voluntarily gave up its nuclear heritage and was the first in the history of mankind to close a major nuclear testing ground, firmly supports the objective of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Our country signed the Treaty during the first week it was open for signature. We note with satisfaction that in two years the CTBT has been signed by 150 States, which is evidence of the broad support for this international instrument by Member States of the United Nations.

A firm proponent of strengthening regional and global security, Kazakhstan firmly opposes undermining the non-proliferation regime and calls upon India and Pakistan to heed the opinion of the vast majority of the international community and accede without delay to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We support the appeal by the Secretary-General to those countries to refrain from deploying nuclear weapons and to cease their weapons development programmes.

Upon signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Kazakhstan declared its desire to work for the strengthening of the regime for the monitoring of nuclear tests. In September this year an international conference on problems of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was held at Kurchatov, Kazakhstan, timed to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the first joint experiment in the monitoring of nuclear tests. The conference was attended by leading specialists and experts from Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, as well as by representatives of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Conference on Disarmament. There was active discussion of the role of international treaties in guaranteeing the non-proliferation regime and of practical measures for maintaining it, as well as of the monitoring of nuclear tests. Programmes for eliminating the consequences of nuclear-weapon tests were also discussed. During the work of the conference, on 17 September, a demonstration calibration explosion was conducted, in the course of which, using chemical explosives, the last strategic missile silo was destroyed.

My Government is paying particular attention to the problems of converting the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, whose research facilities now form part of the national nuclear centre of Kazakhstan. For a number of objective reasons, Kazakhstan possesses a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the development of various methods of monitoring nuclear explosions. Four of Kazakhstan's seismic stations are included in the international monitoring system under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Kazakhstan is among the 10 countries with the largest number of seismic stations in that system, thus enabling us to make a real contribution to the test-monitoring regime.

On the threshold of the 2000 Review Conference, a significant step for the implementation of the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of a consensus decision on the start of negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament to prepare the corresponding treaty on fissile materials. Kazakhstan has always made and will continue to make its contribution to the non-proliferation of nuclear materials and technologies. We are ready to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In this connection, in its activities involving the export of nuclear materials and technologies Kazakhstan has been complying since 1997 with the guiding principles of that Group.

Kazakhstan is also interested in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime. Since we have a space vehicle launching site in our territory and possess scientific and technical potential in the missile-building field, we can make a considerable contribution to that regime and also actively develop cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of missile technology.

Discussions continue to centre on the provision of security assurances for the non-nuclear States. Those States are fully justified in raising this issue on the assumption that, if they have renounced possession of nuclear weapons and are fulfilling their obligations under article II of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they are entitled to count on receiving some legally binding negative security assurances. In this connection, Kazakhstan welcomes the decision to establish in the Conference on Disarmament an Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances.

In the context of strengthening regional security and the non-proliferation regime, Kazakhstan will continue work on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Since the adoption of resolution 52/38 on this subject at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, a number of meetings of experts from the Central Asian States, the nuclear Powers and the United Nations have taken place to develop acceptable ways and means of giving effect to this initiative. Some progress has been made in the work on a draft legal instrument on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for the assistance provided in implementing this initiative. I should also like to thank the delegations of Member States for the support expressed on this subject in their statements during the current discussion in the First Committee. We are aware of the complexity and responsibility of taking a decision on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and of the need for careful study of all the related issues, with the participation of experts from all interested countries.

The international community is faced with a complex task, that of finding effective ways and means of halting the proliferation of conventional weapons. We are aware of the vast importance of the process of reduction of conventional weapons, particularly those which are excessively injurious and have indiscriminate effects. Despite the fact that Kazakhstan has not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines, we fully support the humanitarian orientation of that instrument, the purpose of which is to prevent the proliferation of, and ultimately to destroy, weapons which daily claim thousands of human lives. As a contribution to the multilateral efforts in this sphere, Kazakhstan adopted in August 1996 a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines, including their re-export and transit. At the same time, in view of the situation that is emerging in various countries of the world, the movement for the complete prohibition of anti-personnel landmines should, in our view, be constant and proceed in stages, and to this end the amended landmine Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons needs to enter into force.

The strengthening of the principle of openness and transparency in military affairs, which is embodied in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, enjoys the support of more than 90 Member States, including Kazakhstan. We have been providing the necessary information since the Register came into existence. Kazakhstan advocates limiting the international trade in arms, a problem which has become particularly acute, as is apparent from the large number of regional conflicts. We believe that the main task in this respect is to create an international mechanism which will make it possible to solve this problem through joint efforts.

Kazakhstan is firmly devoted to the cause of strengthening international security and enhancing the role of international organizations in settling global and regional problems and conflicts. Pursuing a policy of constructive cooperation, Kazakhstan has created a belt of security and good-neighbourliness along its borders. We have no confrontations with any State in the world.

Kazakhstan consistently advocates the establishment of security structures in the Asian continent. We continue to work on implementation of the initiative put forward by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly for the convening of a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia, aimed at strengthening stability and security in Asia and at creating an effective cooperation mechanism. We note with satisfaction that this initiative is taking on real shape and becoming a tangible factor in contemporary international life.

Further evidence of this was the holding in Almaty in July this year of a meeting of the leaders of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan on issues of cooperation and confidence-building in the military field and the reduction of armed forces in the border areas. In the Joint Declaration adopted at that meeting, the leaders of the five States confirmed their desire to extend and strengthen multilateral cooperation in the context of the relevant agreements signed by them in Shanghai and Moscow in 1996 and 1997.

We believe that important contributions to strengthening regional security and stability have been made by the conclusion of the agreement between Kazakhstan and China on the delimitation of their State borders; the adoption of the Kazakh-Russian Declaration on eternal friendship and alliance for the twenty-first century; and the signing of the Treaty of eternal friendship between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The firm and consistent position of our State in the sphere of disarmament and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, as well as Kazakhstan's important contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, have won the recognition of many Member States of the United Nations. This, in our view, is precisely why Kazakhstan is entitled to expect full membership in the Conference on Disarmament, that unique international forum which has proved in practice its effectiveness in conducting negotiations on the most urgent problems of disarmament. I should like to express our hope that we shall receive the support of the delegations of Member States in the First Committee in this respect, in the light of General Assembly resolution 52/40 A.

Having participated for eight years in the work of the First Committee as the representative of Kazakhstan, I should like to emphasize the traditionally intensive and constructive nature of the discussions that take place here on the issues on the contemporary disarmament agenda. This is also facilitated to no small extent by our joint efforts to review the activity and rationalize the work of the First Committee. My delegation is ready, as at previous sessions, to work together actively with the delegations of Member States to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Jabir (United Republic of Tanzania): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, given your outstanding diplomatic skills and experience, you will guide the Committee to success. You can count on our cooperation and support in your important task. Our congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee.

Once again we are meeting against the background of positive developments in the disarmament arena. Last year we witnessed the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) began its work. Tanzania is committed to the Convention and its Organization and has already ratified the Convention. We call on all Member States to accede to the Convention as early as possible.

Last December the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was opened for signature. On 16 September the Convention recorded its fortieth ratification, the minimum provided for its entry into force. This Convention will not only make history for being the disarmament treaty to enter into force the fastest; it also reflects the great importance the world attaches to the elimination of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. We firmly believe that the first battle has been won against these weapons, which kill or maim innocent people indiscriminately long after the wars in which they had been employed are over. Efforts should now be directed towards the cause of landmine clearance by making available the technology and resources needed for this difficult but urgent task. Hand in hand with landmine clearance, there should be efforts to treat and reintegrate into society the victims of landmines. Tanzania is proud to be a signatory to this Convention, and while we are in the process of ratifying it we call upon those States that still have doubts and reservations to accede to it and to give it universal application.

We welcome the agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee for the negotiation of a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. We hope all parties will show a spirit of cooperation and negotiate in good faith to reach a successful conclusion. In the same vein, we welcome the decision by the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. It is imperative, therefore, that nuclear-weapon States undertake, without conditions and under legally binding instruments, not to use or threaten to use those weapons against a non-nuclear State or in any nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The end of the cold war created hopes for an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. Those hopes, however, have been shattered by nuclear-weapon States' reluctance to denuclearize. Today, nuclear weapons remain the greatest menace to civilization. The reality of nuclear threat becomes more evident if we take into account the number of nuclear weapons in stock Lack of political will on the part of nuclear-weapon States remains the biggest hindrance to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Once again, my delegation calls on nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to a time-bound framework to eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, we would reiterate our belief in multilateral negotiations leading to the early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention.

My delegation deeply regrets the recent developments in South Asia, which have added to the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indeed, non-proliferation and disarmament have suffered a serious blow. We believe that nuclear weapons cannot keep peace among nations nor guarantee its achievement. Instead, they create suspicion, raise tension and cause instability. In fact, deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. We therefore emphasize the importance of pursuing determined efforts to achieve the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has acquired increased significance in the overall context of regional disarmament. The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok are evidence of the determination of non-nuclear-weapon States to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. Nuclear-weapon-free zones constitute an important confidence-building and disarmament measure which enhances both regional and global peace and security. We have committed ourselves to the Pelindaba Treaty, guided by our conviction that such initiatives contribute to comprehensive efforts towards the ultimate goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament.

According priority to nuclear disarmament does not imply any disregard for the urgent need to work for arms control and disarmament. In this regard, my delegation places particular emphasis on the control of the transfer of small arms and light weapons. The excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is an issue of grave concern to my delegation. The illicit transfer of small arms has also been recognized as a big threat to national and international security.

Africa has increasingly become a victim of the scourge of small arms, which increase the intensity and duration of conflicts. Although they are not the root cause of conflicts, small arms contribute to heavy casualties, particularly among non-combatants, and increase human suffering. In this context, we fully agree with the Secretary-General's observation in his report on the causes of conflict in Africa that:

> "Arms exporting countries have a responsibility to exercise restraint, especially with respect to the export

> of weapons into zones of conflict or tension in Africa." (*A/52/871, para. 28*)

We welcome all initiatives aimed at tackling the problems caused by small arms as well as measures for controlling their transfer. These initiatives include the Mali Moratorium; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, a Convention of the Organization of American States; the European Code of Conduct; and the Oslo Initiative. There is no doubt that all these initiatives will be accommodated under the United Nations coordination known as the Coordinating Action on Small Arms and that they will lead to a concrete action plan. We also support the convening of an international conference on small arms, as proposed by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are convinced that the disarmament mechanism established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be carried forward by another special session.

Mr. Sidorov (Russian Federation)(*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first, on behalf of the Russian delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the important chairmanship of the First Committee. We firmly believe that your knowledge and experience will contribute to fruitful work by the Committee and help to create an environment promoting cooperation and the search for mutually acceptable solutions. Needless to say, you can count on the Russian delegation for its support in the discharge of your duties.

Our present broad agenda covering issues of disarmament and international security clearly shows that today's world is with greater certainty breaking away from the stereotypes of global confrontation. The logic of peace and cooperation in eliminating the threats that have remained from the time of the cold war and in meeting common security challenges at the dawn of the twenty-first century provide great opportunities for interaction in the most diverse areas.

The ongoing process of nuclear-arms reduction can serve as a vivid example of this. In the course of implementing the Russian-United States agreements on strategic arms reductions and limitations, our nations have eliminated more than 1,700 heavy bombers, missile launchers and submarines capable of carrying nuclear missiles, and have deactivated and dismantled more than 18,000 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads.

At the Moscow Summit in September 1998 Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton reaffirmed their adherence to strict compliance with their commitments under the Strategic Arms Reduction and Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaties. They expressed their determination to cooperate for the purpose of speeding up the entry into force of START II and to undertake negotiations on lower levels within the framework of START III as soon as Russia has ratified START II. In this connection, I should like to point out that the Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, has expressed his firm determination to press for ratification of START II by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in the near future. In addition, Russia, within the framework of subsequent strategic arms agreements, is prepared to make far more drastic cuts. At the present stage, we deem it important that the United States also ratify all START II-related instruments.

Russia notes the unilateral measures being taken by other nuclear Powers to reduce their arsenals. We think that such steps could be appropriately incorporated into international commitments. Generally speaking, it is high time all nuclear-weapon States joined the process of nuclear arms control and reduction.

We welcome the decision by the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations on the elaboration of a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices — the so-called cut-off treaty — providing for effective international verification. In our view, it is important that all States members of the Conference on Disarmament have endorsed such negotiations, including those nations — Israel, India and Pakistan — which have not yet acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and have not subjected their nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

As we can see, the process of nuclear disarmament is constantly growing and moving towards its final destination, namely, the elimination of nuclear weapons. Russia continues to be committed to that goal. At the same time, one should cherish no illusions that the process can be easily completed in a flash. Unfortunately, the world is still far from an ideal one, and there still remain threats to international security as well as the natural economic limitations caused by the considerable spending on nuclear arms elimination. In the light of this, attempts to bring about the unduly fast adoption of strictly time-framed nuclear arms elimination programmes are counter-productive.

On the other hand, efforts made by the international community should serve the purpose of creating an environment conducive to the phased reduction of nuclear capabilities. First of all, it is a question of establishing measures for preventing the proliferation of nuclear arms. As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Russia believes it to be a key instrument in ensuring international security and calls for its strengthening and universalization. We consider that to be the main goal of the Treaty's review process, including the Review Conference of its States parties scheduled for the year 2000.

We note Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which we consider to be an important political step and fully welcome. We call upon other States that have not yet done so to follow that positive example.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the most significant achievements in the area of disarmament. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998 seriously challenged that Treaty as well as international efforts to consolidate the global nuclear arms non-proliferation regime in general. Russia condemns those actions. We urge India and Pakistan to enter into an active bilateral dialogue to discuss all unsettled issues in order to ease tension in their relations. Those countries sent a positive message with their declarations of willingness to refrain from conducting nuclear tests in the future and to take part in negotiations on the cut-off treaty held in Geneva. We strongly urge them to accede unconditionally to the CTBT, which is the only realistic and feasible approach.

Russia advocates the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. The concept of nuclear-free space is consonant with the Russian President's initiative to limit the deployment of nuclear arms within the national boundaries of the respective nuclear States. We also believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the best way to provide additional security assurances to non-nuclear States. Nearly a hundred non-nuclear-weapon member States in the respective zones have so far obtained legally binding assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

It is of course important that agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones comply with universally recognized international criteria and fully ensure the nuclear-free status of the region they cover. Issues related to the clear geographical delimitation of zones, the responsibilities to be borne by Member States and the terms and conditions applied to the creation of the zones, including a ban on the transit of nuclear arms through their territory, need to be examined thoroughly.

I should like to draw attention to an issue which, in our opinion, calls for close scrutiny, namely, depriving terrorists of any opportunity to gain possession of nuclear weapons. Russia has submitted a draft convention to combat acts of nuclear terrorism to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. We expect that other delegations will support our initiative so that the convention may be approved as early as at this present session.

Given the increased interdependency of the modern world, the threats of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are becoming transnational and global in nature.Russia takes a responsible approach to its commitments to ban chemical and biological weapons. We have submitted timely notifications to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as required by the Chemical Weapons Convention, and international inspections of the notified Russian facilities have been completed. We believe that in order to bolster the Convention's multilateral regime and maintain the status of the OPCW, the international verification mechanism should be adhered to and ways should be found to cut the Organization's expenditures.

During the recent meeting between the Presidents of Russia and the United States, a joint statement on the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention was issued. We hope that it will give a new impetus to the negotiations aimed at drafting the protocol to the Convention and that it will establish clear and objective criteria and definitions, eliminating any free interpretations of the Convention's provisions and preventing misunderstandings that could thus arise.

Russia, as a pioneer in rocket-building and space exploration, is in favour of responsible behaviour on the part of States in that area. Outer space belongs to all mankind, and it should not serve as a testing ground for new types of weapons. Attempts to build anti-satellite systems will lead to the militarization of outer space and undermine strategic stability. Furthermore, anti-satellite systems, similar as they are to anti-missile technologies, could emerge as a real channel for the circumvention of existing treaties, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in particular. In our view, multilateral diplomacy must play an important part in addressing this issue.

We also understand the concerns raised by the proliferation and launching of ballistic missiles. Russia, in cooperation with the United States, took an initiative to exchange information on missile launches and early warning. We expect that other States that launch ballistic missiles will also make provisions for such measures, a move which would help remove unjustified risks and suspicions.

It is encouraging that the disarmament process has recently been growing both vertically and horizontally, covering new regions and topical issues. Russia supports reasonable initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in small arms. We favour the continued examination of this issue within the framework of the United Nations, including the convening of an international conference to deal with this problem, which could agree upon joint measures to ban illegal trafficking in small arms.

Russia is committed to openness in the area of international transfers of conventional weapons and intends to continue its participation in the relevant United Nations Register.

We consider the problem of anti-personnel landmines a pressing disarmament issue. As a country which is still, more than 50 years after the end of the Second World War, encountering the threat to the civilian population posed by landmines, Russia believes that international cooperation in the area of demining is crucially important and is ready to work actively for that cause under United Nations auspices.

Russia has enforced a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and has signed the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We appreciate the efforts made by several countries with a view to banning anti-personnel landmines. However, we believe that the issue should be settled through negotiations. We call for negotiations to be launched at the Conference on Disarmament to ban transfers of anti-personnel mines.

We are convinced that global security is largely based on regional security. Russia deems it important for the United Nations to support regional disarmament processes.

The European continent is today going through a very important period. Truly unparalleled measures are being taken there which are designed to lay the foundation for security in the twenty-first century.

I should like to mention the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). We feel that the renewed instrument reflecting the new circumstances will help to soften the consequences of the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has a negative impact on European security, and that it will serve as solid proof of the declarations that the Alliance's defence policy is not directed against Russia and other Eastern European nations.

We hope that in the next few months the negotiating States will succeed in reaching mutually acceptable solutions to the key issues of the negotiations, namely, ensuring stability in Central Europe and settling the so-called flank issue. All of them, essentially, are highlighted in the Russia-NATO Founding Act. In this context, we pin great hopes on the dialogue between Russia and NATO conducted within the framework of the Permanent Joint Council, which is turning into a useful tool for the discussion of CFE-related issues, but which, of course, does not substitute for negotiations held in Vienna.

The Russian delegation has set forth a number of fresh ideas aimed at giving a boost to the Vienna negotiations. If we want to be successful, every party will have to meet its counterparts half way, whereas reliance on unilateral concessions will take us nowhere.

Today we are living in an information age that is a basic reflection of every aspect of our societies overall and that opens up broad prospects for the rapid and harmonious development of our world civilization. Today we can talk about the creation of a truly global information sector within the international community, in which information is becoming the most valuable possession of both nations and the world at large.

At the same time, it is essential to consider the threat — perhaps for the time being only potential, but nonetheless serious — that developments in the information field can be used for purposes incompatible with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security, the observance of the principles of the non-use of force, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for human rights and freedoms.

There is also emerging a real threat of information resources' being tapped for terrorist or criminal purposes, which could lead to a disaster. In our opinion, such a threat requires that preventive measures be taken today. We cannot permit the emergence of a fundamentally new area of international confrontation, which may lead to an escalation of the arms race based on the latest developments of the scientific and technological revolution and, as a result, divert an enormous amount of the resources needed for peaceful creativity and development.

The Russian Federation believes that the issue of international information security should be discussed by the United Nations in a specific and purposeful manner. This purpose is served by a draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.17) entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", which was prepared by the Russian Federation and distributed as a General Assembly document under agenda item 63. We should like to take the opportunity at this early stage to point out that our proposal is non-confrontational in nature, that it strives for consensus and that it searches for ways to solve problems through collective wisdom and joint efforts, on the basis of the common interest of the international community. We intend to give a detailed presentation of the draft resolution in the course of the substantive debate, and we call upon delegations that might take an interest in it to consider their possible co-sponsorship.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): First of all, I should like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election to the office of Chairman of this important Committee and to pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mongolia's position on many of the disarmament and international security related issues found expression in the Final Document of the twelfth summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held in August-September in Durban, South Africa. Nevertheless, I should like today to make six points, as follows.

The first concerns fully multilateral disarmament mechanisms. My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his important and timely statement on the pressing issues of disarmament and international security. In this regard, we welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which, together with further improvements in the work of this Committee and some other disarmament bodies, is viewed by my delegation as a positive step in strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament at the threshold of the new millennium. Similarly, Mongolia welcomes the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of the Ad Hoc Committees on negative security assurances and on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices as timely steps towards making long overdue progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, I come to nuclear disarmament. Despite the encouraging signs that I have mentioned, my delegation believes that in reality little progress has been registered of late in the field of nuclear disarmament. The nuclear Powers have yet to embark on serious nuclear disarmament negotiations, as required by article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and upheld by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion. Moreover, the series of nuclear tests conducted a few months ago in South Asia have raised the spectre of nuclear-weapons proliferation and of igniting a nuclear arms race in the region, with possible far-reaching destabilizing consequences well beyond the region.

Mongolia, like many other States, has expressed its deep regret over the tests, urged India and Pakistan to refrain from any further tests and appealed to them to take steps to become parties to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Mongolia's support for the latest encouraging declarations of intent by those States to sign the CTBT. In this context, my delegation welcomes the declaration by the People's Republic of China that it will not resume nuclear tests despite these recent tests.

My delegation believes that the eight-nation joint declaration of 9 June this year is timely and intended, as the representative of the Republic of South Africa pointed out,

> "to put forward a realistic and achievable agenda for the achievement of nuclear disarmament." (*A/C.1/53/PV.3*)

We believe that the eight-nation initiative deserves serious attention and support.

My third point concerns the formation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones. Among the international efforts aimed at contributing to strengthening nuclear security and enhancing stability, Mongolia attaches great importance to the contributions of non-nuclear States, especially by, *inter alia*, establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. We believe that such zones are important measures in the process of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In this context, our delegation welcomes and supports the latest regional effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The recent consultative expert-level meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and, especially, the preliminary exchange of views on the basic elements of the future treaty are encouraging. It is our hope that the zone in Central Asia will be created before the year 2000, as underlined in the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review Conference. As a close, if not an immediate, neighbour of the Central Asian States, and as one of the active advocates of this proposal, we are happy to see action being taken on it. Mongolia is prepared to offer its full cooperation and support in this endeavour.

Fourthly, I turn to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. If one looks at the geophysical map of the world, one can see that for evident geophysical reasons some States cannot be part of one or another geographical region. This is the case with Mongolia, which does not physically border on any Central Asian State. However, this cannot serve as a valid reason to exclude States such as Mongolia from common disarmament efforts, including the efforts to expand the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In fact, the international community recognized as far back as 1975 the right of even individual States to create nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Inspired by the progress in the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, and guided by the noble aim of turning yet another part of the world, which is larger than Central Europe, into such a zone, Mongolia in 1992 declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This declaration of ours has been well received and even supported by our two immediate neighbours, China and Russia, the three other nuclear-weapon States and the entire Non-Aligned Movement. In Durban last September, the latter declared that the Movement welcomed and supported Mongolia's policy to institutionalize its single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone status. Mongolia's contacts with the nuclear-weapon States give us reason to believe that its status could be institutionalized in an appropriate form in the near future, reflecting its geopolitical role and balance of interests.

My fifth point is with regard to the role of small and medium-sized States. Disarmament and ensuring international security are not the exclusive prerogatives of the big and powerful. The role of small and medium-sized States in the process of disarmament and strengthening international security should not be underestimated. Forming as they do the vast majority of the international community, they are playing, collectively or individually, a more active role in the disarmament and confidence-building processes. The role of the Non-Aligned Movement and of some regional mechanisms is vivid proof of that.

In this connection, and in the context of highlighting the role of smaller States in promoting international security and mutual confidence, I should like to dwell briefly on what my country is doing in this respect. This year Mongolia published for the first time a defence White Paper. It is based on Mongolia's national security and foreign policy concepts as well as on the fundamentals of the country's military doctrine. The defence White Paper states that Mongolia pursues an open and non-aligned policy and that it does not view any country as its enemy. It has refrained from joining any military alliance or grouping. It has also refrained from allowing its territory or airspace to be used against any other country, as well as from allowing the stationing of foreign troops or weapons, including nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction, on its territory. Instead, in the past few years it has set up or upgraded a number of seismic monitoring stations in its territory as an important, integral part of the worldwide network of stations for monitoring the compliance of States with the CTBT. These stations have clearly detected all the South Asian nuclear tests, and the data have been duly forwarded to the proper international bodies.

For obvious reasons, Mongolia gives priority to its relations with its immediate neighbours, in pursuit of a policy of balanced relationships. Maintaining a balanced relationship does not mean, in our case, keeping a mechanical equidistance between them or taking identical positions on all issues. The policy is meant to strengthen trust and to develop all-round good-neighbourly relations with both of them, taking due account of their policies in regard to our clearly defined vital national interests. A policy of non-involvement and neutrality is being pursued in relation to the possible disputes that might arise between the two neighbours. Our policy is well understood and well received by our two neighbours, thus expanding the area of confidence and good-neighbourliness in the region. It also fully coincides with the Sino-Russian joint declaration that they will not use force or the threat of force in any form whatsoever against each other, including using the territory and airspace of third countries.

With respect to the United Nations, the defence White Paper specifically underlines that Mongolia will fulfil its United Nations Charter obligations to support the latter's activities, when necessary, by way of dispatching observers and offering good-offices mediation and translation services.

This year Mongolia has become a fully fledged dialogue partner of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, and it intends to participate more actively in the regional multilateral activities aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability at the regional level. Moreover, together with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Mongolia intends to host next summer in Ulan Bator an international conference to focus on the pressing disarmament and security-related issues of the region. Bearing in mind the role that the Centre is playing in discussing and examining regional disarmament problems, and seeing the great potential of this Centre, my country is in favour of further enhancing the Centre's activities on a solid financial basis.

My sixth point concerns the special session devoted to disarmament. Some progress was registered with respect to the question of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) during the last session of the Disarmament Commission. However, no consensus has emerged in the Commission on the objectives and agenda of the special session, as required by General Assembly resolution 52/38 F. This is unfortunate. Two decades have passed since the holding of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which adopted truly historic decisions, and a decade has elapsed since the third special session. The implementation of special sessions devoted to disarmament needs proper review and appraisal. Moreover, the question of nuclear disarmament is acquiring even greater importance in the wake of the recent nuclear tests in South Asia.

In addition, at the threshold of the third millennium the geopolitical contours of the world are undergoing dramatic changes and transformations that demand adequate collective responses and adjustments. New forms of potential threat are looming with the intensification of scientific and technological progress. One such potential threat has been identified by the representative of the Russian Federation with developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. All these changes and transformations call for the speediest convening of SSOD IV.

My delegation believes that fixing the concrete date for convening SSOD IV is the least the Assembly should do at this stage, so as to allow it to proceed immediately to concrete preparations. Since the session needs to be adequately prepared, and since the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference is scheduled to be held in the year 2000, it seems logical to focus on 2001 as the year for convening SSOD IV and to take a decision on that at this present session.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Mr. Chairman, my delegation is glad to see you presiding over the work of the Committee and to extend to you our warm congratulations. We assure you and the other officers of the Committee of our full support and cooperation.

Disarmament and international security remain the key issues on the United Nations agenda, inasmuch as a stable peace and a secure international environment are basic and fundamental for ensuring a better world for every nation.

Looking back, we can see some distinct progress in this domain. Despite some disappointments, our disarmament achievements, although still very modest, have been very important. These achievements give us confidence that we can do more if we act together and with more vigour.

Since last year we have managed to reach agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a fissile material treaty. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) finally entered into force. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction received the necessary number of ratifications for its subsequent entry into force on 1 March 1999. Positive steps are being taken towards strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

Step by step, sometimes with evident progress and breakthroughs in some directions, sometimes painfully overcoming various impasses, the international community is gradually, piece by piece, shaping a new architecture of security for the twenty-first century. We strongly believe that in this coming century, as the President of the Ukraine once said here at the United Nations, the world should become free of weapons of mass destruction, and the international community should develop every opportunity to bring this goal closer.

These aspirations, however, have experienced serious challenges in the light of recent developments in South Asia. We have explicitly expressed our views on this issue. Our reaction to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan was motivated by Ukraine's well-known position on nuclear disarmament and its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Therefore, I should like to voice again our appeal to these two countries, with which Ukraine has friendly relations, to adhere to the international non-proliferation regime and to refrain from further nuclear tests. In this context, we welcome the statements made by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in which they indicated the progress in both countries on becoming parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

My delegation shares the views expressed by many representatives in this Committee that the entry into force of the CTBT would contribute significantly to furthering the process of practical nuclear disarmament, with a view to the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. As for Ukraine, I should note that all documents related to the Treaty are ready for submission to the Parliament for ratification.

As a party to START I, Ukraine considers the START process to be an integral part of the process of nuclear disarmament. Today criticism is mounting among non-nuclear States over the lack of progress in this crucial field. We are convinced that ratification by the Russian Federation of START II without delay would enable the latter's rapid entry into force and clear the way for negotiations on START III.

We also support the declaration by a group of countries on 9 June 1998, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

I should like to stress my delegation's satisfaction over the consensus reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices. Our satisfaction is doubled by the fact that at that time the Conference on Disarmament was chaired by the representative of Ukraine. In our view, the scope of the future fissile material treaty should not be limited to banning the production of such material. The possibility of reducing stocks should also be considered. We also believe that the provisions of a future agreement must envisage the declaration of existing stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.

The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and their accumulation and proliferation continue to constitute a serious threat to regional and national security, to contribute to the aggravation of tensions that lead to internal conflicts and to have negative repercussions on the economic development of the affected countries. This was repeatedly stated by many delegations at recent meetings of the General Assembly on agenda item 164, concerning the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We believe that the time has come for the international community to study and consider action-oriented recommendations to combat the destabilizing flow of and illicit traffic in small arms as a starting point for negotiating a global convention. Our deliberations on this issue in the United Nations Disarmament Commission will undoubtedly facilitate further discussions on such a convention.

Ukraine welcomed the achievements of the Ottawa process, as it shares the common aspiration to overcome the humanitarian crisis caused by large-scale, indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. As its contribution to the efforts of the international community, Ukraine has strictly adhered to the national moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines since 1995. It does not produce such weapons. Moreover, Ukraine undertook unilateral measures on the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel landmines. In March-April of this year alone, we destroyed more than 100,000 anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, supervised by Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala. We believe that under his able and dynamic stewardship the Department will successfully refocus the attention of the United Nations on crucial issues of disarmament. We hope that the spirit of reform conceived at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will guide the Department's current activities.

Those are some of my delegation's comments on some aspects of the issues before us. We reserve the right to make additional specific comments on some other issues in the course of our debate.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. Chairman, I take pleasure in extending to you, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, my sincere congratulations on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee. We are confident that your qualities and vast diplomatic experience will contribute to the success of the Committee's deliberations.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are concerned with determining new criteria for international multilateral relations, which should be based on equality and on the common goals and interests of all States as well as on a full commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of international law. Yet that ambition seems difficult of attainment, as the policies of the arms race and mutual deterrence continue to prevail in some regions of the world, especially where ethnic differences, civil conflicts and foreign occupation persist. None of this would have come about had it not been for the unjustified policies pursued by some States in producing, stockpiling and transferring certain destructive weapons. That, in turn, has created both security problems and socio-economic problems, including displacement of populations, human rights violations, terrorism and illicit trafficking in weapons, environmental degradation and other actions that have worked against real stability and prevented peoples from benefiting equally from development opportunities.

Taken as a whole, such international events and their evolution demonstrate that the current world environment consists of various elements stemming from the lack of the necessary political will on the part of certain States to halt arms races involving various kinds of weapons and to resort to peaceful negotiating methods or arbitration and other legal frameworks in resolving their differences, in keeping with the norms of international law, principles of equality and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-intervention in internal affairs. As a result, we regard the continuation of such situations, particularly in the Middle East and Arab Gulf region, and in neighbouring regions as well, as a direct and dangerous threat not only to the peoples and countries of those regions but to international peace and security as a whole. This is conducive to the creation of a serious imbalance that is unacceptable in bilateral and international relations.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the recent international arbitration regarding sovereignty over the Hanish archipelago, where the decision was in favour of Yemen. We regard such a peaceful and legal method as a civilized approach that should be adopted to settle similar disputes. In particular, it should be adopted with regard to the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of our three islands of Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, in violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Such a solution would achieve security and stability in the region and enhance the aspirations of its peoples to economic and social development.

In the same vein, we support the efforts being made by President Hosni Mubarak and other parties to contain the present dispute between Turkey and Syria through peaceful negotiations. We also express our support for the efforts being made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to reach a peaceful and objective resolution of the situation presently existing between Iran and Afghanistan. Similarly, we also hope that contacts between India and Pakistan will be promoted so that they may resolve their problems in a peaceful manner rather than through competition in nuclear testing, which, in our opinion, can never contribute to containing problems resulting from differences between them. On the contrary, such competition would complicate and prolong those differences, threaten destruction for their peoples and impede regional security and stability.

The United Arab Emirates, honouring its international commitments and convinced of the importance of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, has signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This was in the nature of its contribution to international efforts aimed at promoting respect for the universality of those three treaties, which are of such importance in global disarmament.

Convinced of the linkage between regional and international security, the United Arab Emirates welcomed the initiatives aiming at the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, Africa, the Pacific and, lastly, Central Asia. We consider the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East to be most urgently needed; it is a basic element in the realization of a just, durable and comprehensive peace in that region, in accordance with international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace.

Consequently, we once again call upon the international community to exert additional pressure on the Government of Israel, as a nuclear-weapon State, to accede immediately to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also support the call for a ban on all transfers of nuclear-related equipment, information and resources to Israel. Such transfers constitute basic sources contributing to an increase in Israel's nuclear capabilities and facilities, which, in our view, pose a continuing grave and direct threat not only to the security of its neighbours in the region but also to international peace and security and to other world efforts in the field of sustainable socio-economic development.

While we attach great importance to the efforts being made by the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of global disarmament, we believe that the realization of the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is a collective international responsibility. This calls for cooperation between the nuclear-weapon

States, particularly with regard to providing assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, we support the proposed establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with a view to the institution of a programme of action to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide within a fixed time-frame. We also support international efforts aimed at concluding an agreement banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, with a view to guaranteeing, through such an agreement, the completion of efforts being made to bring about the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates supports the position of the Group of Arab States and the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which have called for enhanced transparency in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In this regard, due consideration should be given to the legitimate needs of self-defence, as well as other political, security and military concerns for each geographic region, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. We also share the international concern about the continued illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons, since they represent basic sources feeding terrorism and violence and are an element in the destabilization of States.

We also support the outcome of the Ottawa Conference, held last December, which resulted in an international Convention banning the use of anti-personnel landmines, since such lethal weapons affect the lives of millions of innocent civilians, not only during wars but in peacetime as well. They also hinder many development programmes in affected countries. In this connection, we call for increased international cooperation to provide the facilities needed for demining activities in the developing countries and to assist in the rehabilitation of the thousands of victims in various parts of the world.

In conclusion, we welcome the proposals for strengthening United Nations capabilities in the field of disarmament as a collective responsibility that constitutes the best global investment in the construction of peace, sustainable development and security.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Several representatives have asked to make statements in exercise of the right of reply. I would remind representatives that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second.

Mr. Shin Kak-soo (Republic of Korea): In response to the statement by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the fourth meeting of the First Committee yesterday, I should like to make some brief remarks in order to give the Committee a clear and correct understanding of the issues involved.

First, on the North Korean nuclear issue, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea argued as though North Korea were currently under no obligation to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement and to cooperate with the IAEA in the Agreement's implementation. This is incorrect. Its obligation to fully comply with the IAEA Safeguards Agreement is a legal obligation on it as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This legally binding obligation cannot be replaced or superseded by a bilateral arrangement, such as the Geneva Agreed Framework. The Agreed Framework can only serve to complement and reinforce the obligations to which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is bound. It could never exonerate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from existing legal obligations under the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. This has been reaffirmed on numerous occasions by the international community through resolutions of the United Nations and the IAEA, including the most recent one adopted at the forty-second regular session of the General Conference of the IAEA on 25 September 1998.

For the purpose of full compliance with the Safeguards Agreement, it is of paramount importance for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully cooperate with the IAEA to preserve all the information which the IAEA deems necessary for verification of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's past nuclear activities. It is also crucial that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demonstrate full transparency in the context of the IAEA's activities monitoring the freeze of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear facilities, as provided in the Agreed Framework. Therefore, I once again urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respond positively.

Secondly, with regard to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, my delegation is very disappointed to note that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has virtually declined to implement the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which it freely entered into with the Republic of Korea. Nothing can justify any attempt to turn such an important legal instrument into a scrap of paper.

Making the Korean peninsula free from the danger of nuclear proliferation is of paramount importance for the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and for the well-being of the Korean people as a whole. Moreover, it is also crucial to the security of the region and beyond. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate its appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to be forthcoming in taking the necessary steps for the implementation of the Joint Declaration as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea spoke of political and military threats against it and of unwarranted misgivings regarding forced unification by others. This perception is groundless. As we have repeatedly stated, my Government is currently actively pursuing a constructive engagement policy, called the "Sunshine Policy", based on the following three principles: no tolerance for any military provocation by North Korea; no attempts on our part to absorb North Korea for unification; the active promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation, exchange and cooperation. Furthermore, my Government is making its best efforts to ease tension and to establish a durable peace regime on the Korean peninsula through the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue and the four-party talks process.

In this connection, I would recall the statement of my Foreign Minister during last month's general debate during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, in which he said:

> "The main thrust of President Kim's engagement policy is to establish a workable system of peaceful coexistence based on reconciliation and mutual trust."

And he added a little later:

> "our immediate objective is, first and foremost, peaceful coexistence." (A/53/PV.15)

Let me underline once again our earnest hope that the DPRK can understand our genuine intention and respond with sincerity and good faith to our policies.

Finally, I fully agree with the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea when he said that priority should be given to the dismantling of the cold-war structure on the Korean peninsula. But to achieve this goal successfully, concrete actions for non-proliferation and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery should be taken now. During the Korean War, the Korean people experienced the second largest number of casualties of this century. That is enough for us. Given the volatile and tense situation in the Korean peninsula, it is imperative that, first and foremost, the Korean peninsula be cleared of any horrific weapons of mass destruction.

The Republic of Korea is a party to the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), three basic legal instruments which significantly contribute to peace and security in the Korean peninsula. We have also signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we are now proceeding with domestic procedures for its ratification next year. With its already formidable build-up, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has no reason not to take similar steps, and it should renounce, once and for all, weapons of mass destruction.

I wish to reiterate our sincere appeal to the DPRK to join us as a reliable partner in our noble endeavours for the genuine peace and prosperity of the Korean peninsula and the world.

Mr. Alborzi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In the statement by the representative of the United States earlier today, reference was made to Iran's missile technology capabilities. Since this issue was raised in the context of weapons of mass destruction, I would like to recall that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to all conventions on weapons of mass destruction, without exception, and considers its missile technology as a legitimate, conventional defensive means. Iran's deterrent missile technology serves solely for self-defence and, as was clearly pointed out in an Iranian Foreign Ministry statement, does not constitute a threat to any country and is not set for first use.

My delegation, however, believes that attention should be given to the weapons of mass destruction and missile capabilities of Israel, the only non-party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the Middle East region. Ironically, Iran's missile tests did not raise any concern on the part of the countries in the region. In the meantime, Israeli weapons of mass destruction, as well as Israel's clandestine nuclear and missile programmes, continue to pose major threats to regional security. This is an established fact, on which there exists a strong regional consensus, and the speaker could have sounded more reasonable if he had referred to this fact and the real threat to the Middle East.

Reference was also made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates to some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country, which, in my view, had little relevance to the mandate of the First Committee. Since we have clearly and repeatedly put on record our position on this issue, I need not go into details. Iran is of the firm view that this issue should be addressed in bilateral negotiations and with goodwill in order to find a solution. We are fully committed to our international obligations, including those arising from the 1971 agreement. We have friendly relations with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, and we stand ready, as in the past, to enter into negotiations in good faith and on the basis of historical fact and international law, without preconditions, in order to remove any and all misunderstandings.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates)(*interpretation from Arabic*): I apologize for speaking again. It is most regrettable that my colleague, the representative of Iran, should respond to my statement in the Committee as he did. He is fully aware that the Islamic Republic of Iran has occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates since 1971. What I said stemmed basically from the principles of the Charter and international law. We once again express the hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will respond to the peaceful initiatives of the United Arab Emirates, either on a bilateral level or through recourse to the International Court of Justice, to reach a final settlement of the problem of Iran's occupation of our three islands and to strengthen cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, on the one hand, and between the other countries of the region and Iran, on the other.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations
A/C.1/53/PV.6

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

First Committee

6th Meeting
Thursday, 15 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Vidricaire (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to assure you of Canada's full support as you carry out the weighty tasks that await you.

The year 1998 has been a significant one in the realm of international security.

We have experienced a profound test of the strength of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear-non-proliferation regimes. We have seen significant steps forward on conventional arms. It has become clearer than ever that the international community must continually defend its historic successes as it tries to expand its future horizons.

Canada's point of departure vis-à-vis non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament with regard to weapons of mass destruction is the maintenance, defence and enhancement of the implementation of three fundamental global treaties: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). These fundamental instruments are complemented by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In The Hague, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is working to ensure that Treaty's implementation. We welcome those intensive efforts. In Geneva, in keeping with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, confidence-building negotiations are under way. That Convention needs more muscle, and an effective compliance protocol is the answer. To achieve that goal, Canada supports the Australian initiative to give political impetus to those negotiations. If the international community is truly concerned about biological weapons — and we believe that it should be — the time is ripe to give those negotiations new energy and greater priority so that we can conclude an effective protocol soon.

This brings us to the NPT. It is useful to recall what the international community has created with this Treaty. The NPT entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. Canada warmly welcomes Brazil's accession on 18 September 1998. The NPT now has 187 States parties, more States than are Members of the United Nations and all but four States of the international community. It is the best tool we could possibly have for carrying out a very difficult task. The NPT is the legal foundation the international community has created to build nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is the only international treaty that commits the nuclear-weapon States, politically and legally, to pursue nuclear disarmament. It is the only treaty that prohibits the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community must continue to pursue vigorously the implementation of all the obligations contained in the NPT.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The vitality of the NPT depends in part on the success of the new preparatory process for future NPT Review Conferences. At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, States parties agreed that the process would be different, that its integrity would be enhanced and that it would pursue all substantive aspects of the 1995 agreements. Canada has been fully engaged in efforts to ensure that outcome. This means that the meetings of the Preparatory Committee must be able to develop recommendations on substantive issues for consideration at the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT. We think that each session of the Preparatory Committee should enable us to deal with substantive issues relevant to the Treaty. We should not have to wait until 2000 to express consensus opinions on key issues of pressing concern to the States parties. At the 1998 meeting of the Preparatory Committee it was clear that, while the vast majority of the international community agreed with this approach, a few States did not. The need for a more dynamic and reassuring process in the NPT Preparatory Committee is all the more pressing now. We urge the few States that have been more cautious or selective to reconsider the consequences of their reluctance and to act to support the integrity and vitality of the regime. All States have a stake in and can benefit from this more proactive approach.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, efforts are clearly already under way to implement the obligations of the NPT. A vigorous START process is essential to nuclear disarmament. START I entered into force on 5 December 1994, and we are told that its implementation is ahead of schedule. Ballistic missiles are being dismantled, and fissile material is being removed from warheads. We continue to applaud this. This is nuclear disarmament in action. We also recognize that a number of parallel agreements have been reached in the context of this process, including those reached at the most recent United States-Russia summit meeting, some of whose elements have already begun to be implemented. We welcome this too.

Unfortunately, however, the START process is at present at a standstill. We must move forward. The ratification and implementation of START II are essential for enhancing international security. We have been waiting since 3 January 1993, when START II was signed by Russia and the United States, for it to be ratified and enter into force. Last year, we again welcomed the United States ratification and called upon Russia to do likewise. This was not merely rhetorical encouragement: Canada has a fundamental and clear security interest in seeing this Treaty ratified and implemented, as well as in seeing the START process continue. In 1998, we again called for completion of the ratification process for START II.

The smooth and prompt initiation of START III negotiations is also essential to furthering the process of nuclear disarmament. The reduction of the number of nuclear weapons and nuclear warheads possessed and deployed by the United States and Russia does more than increase those two States' confidence in their own security. It also helps reassure States in every region about their own security and about the vitality of the international security regime. This, in turn, is conducive to progress on a range of other security issues. To help reinvigorate the ongoing process of nuclear disarmament, we call upon the United States and Russia to implement all those undertakings already agreed between them, including especially negotiations for START III.

It is also clear that in the systematic and progressive pursuit of their legally binding obligations to achieve nuclear disarmament the other three nuclear-weapon States can and should join the START process in the near future. As part of such an effort, we think that preliminary discussions to this end would bolster international confidence in the international security regime.

The CTBT bans nuclear explosive tests for all time. Concluded in 1996, the Treaty now boasts 150 States signatories, 21 of which have ratified it. Canada's domestic legislation has been approved by the House of Commons, and we hope to deposit our instrument of ratification soon. We welcome the work under way in Vienna to make the verification regime completely functional as soon as the Treaty enters into force. We look forward to a political conference in the autumn of 1999, as called for by article XIV of the CTBT, as a contribution to an ongoing process to promote the Treaty's early entry into force. The Treaty's text is clear that the political conference is to consider measures consistent with international law to accelerate the ratification process so as to facilitate the early entry into force of the CTBT. We look forward to participating fully in that conference to ensure that its objective is achieved.

In 1998, the Conference on Disarmament finally agreed to begin to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This treaty has been a Canadian goal for more than 40 years. We keenly hope that these negotiations will lead to the early conclusion of a treaty that will promote both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. We will work intensively with all interested countries to conclude such a treaty. We realize that much reflection is necessary in order for the negotiations to be pursued effectively. Canada is confident that the international community will be prepared to deal with substantive issues when the Conference on Disarmament reconvenes in January of next year.

Canada considers that the absence of agreement on whether the question of stockpiles should be a part of a possible treaty on halting the production of fissile materials does not mean that we should ignore such a vital issue. The reduction of fissile material stockpiles is an essential part of nuclear disarmament. According to authoritative estimates, about 2,000 tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium are currently stockpiled. That is enough material for 100,000 nuclear warheads. We call for a moratorium on all production of fissile material for the duration of the treaty negotiations. Moreover, States possessing weapons-grade fissile material should take progressive steps to remove it irreversibly from the military cycle. The United States and Russia have already taken steps to that end, such as those announced at the recent summit meeting between President Clinton and President Yeltsin. We welcome those steps. We also welcome the trilateral discussions on this issue between the United States, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as the unilateral steps taken by the United Kingdom. Those steps, and others like them, will provide a better atmosphere for the negotiation of an effective treaty.

The NPT obligates all States to help to reduce the global threat of nuclear weapons. This means that we must make it possible to engage in serious and substantive discussions of nuclear-disarmament issues. Since September 1996, Canada has proposed that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva establish a subsidiary body for that purpose. Others have made similar proposals. It is time for the Conference on Disarmament to respond. A mechanism within the Conference on Disarmament with a mandate to engage in a substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues would show our faith in the international security regime. It would promote the vitality of the regime and would be in the security interests of all States. The international community has a right to expect no less.

In short, it is clear that nuclear disarmament is becoming a reality. In some areas, however, the pace has slowed in recent years. It must be accelerated. The time is ripe for more to be done.

It is also clear that we must continue to be vigilant with regard to nuclear non-proliferation. In this decade, we have faced setbacks and have welcomed positive developments. With regard to the former, two States parties have attempted in recent years to acquire or develop nuclear weapons. The NPT has provided the legal basis for rolling back these attempts to develop nuclear weapons.

There are also positive examples of developments that have enhanced the non-proliferation regime. Early in this decade, one State voluntarily gave up its nuclear weapons to join the regime as a non-nuclear-weapon State. More recently, three States transferred to the Russian Federation the nuclear weapons left on their territories following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Those three States also joined the regime as non-nuclear-weapon States. As we have already mentioned, less than a month ago Brazil announced its accession to the Treaty. Most recently, the IAEA has established its 93+2 model protocol. On that basis, bilateral protocols are being concluded with the Agency. This strengthens the regime's ability to detect and prevent further moves towards proliferation. Each of these positive developments has clearly enhanced international security.

Notwithstanding all our success in maintaining, defending and enhancing the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, in 1998 the regime has again been seriously challenged by the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests. While neither country had adhered to the NPT, their arguments purporting to justify those tests attack the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. Canada condemns nuclear-weapon testing and rejects those arguments.

Non-proliferation means no proliferation at all under any circumstances. Nothing in the regime authorizes selective proliferation by some States and not by others. All attempts at proliferation must be halted if international and regional security are to be enhanced and if the integrity and viability of the NPT are to be preserved. This is one of the fundamental principles of the NPT. It is a principle that we, with many other States, have reaffirmed in other key international forums in response to the challenges of the South Asian tests. We need the NPT principles in order to carry out sustainable, coherent action. If we allow the regime or the principles on which it is built to be undermined in any way as a result of events in a given region or as the result of our response to those events, the security of States in all other regions of the world may well be jeopardized. All States must have confidence that the regime's most basic principles will be applied consistently and coherently. We have worked too hard for too long to turn back now.

We welcome efforts to engage in dialogue with India and Pakistan for the purpose of drawing them into the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. The threat to regional security and the economic and social consequences for South Asia outweigh any attempt to justify the pursuit of a nuclear-weapons programme. Foreign Minister Axworthy emphasized in his statement on 26 May 1998 that there can be no enhanced status, explicit or implicit, conferred upon these States in our efforts to roll back this latest attempt at proliferation. Any such status would undermine not only the principles but also the implementation and the success of the NPT.

The growing global commitment to human security is nowhere clearer than in the common effort to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The progress achieved in this area has been remarkable indeed. The whole world — people, States and civil society — has recognized the tragic human toll of anti-personnel landmines. The vast majority of the international community has agreed that a total ban on these indiscriminate weapons is the best solution.

Canada is delighted that, thanks to the commitment of many Governments, the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, which was negotiated at Oslo and opened for signature in Ottawa last December, will enter into force on 1 March 1999. We warmly welcome the invitation of the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of States parties in Maputo in May of 1999. That meeting will provide important political impetus and practical focus to ensure that the world is rid of anti-personnel landmines in years rather than decades. It will mark the beginning of a formal — indeed, legal — process that will ensure not only that treaty commitments are implemented but also that the high standards of the Convention are upheld. Canada is a proud sponsor of the First Committee's draft resolution welcoming the fortieth ratification of the Convention, which has set us on the road to the first meeting of States parties. We hope that many other countries will join us in support of this draft resolution.

Canada is committed to working with friends and partners to universalize the Convention and, just as importantly, to ensure that demining and victim-assistance efforts are adequately funded and sustained over the long term. The Governments, non-governmental organizations and institutions that have worked so effectively in conjunction with the United Nations must continue to work together with determination in this next phase. Our efforts in support of the Convention and the humanitarian mine-action agenda that it underpins will be greatly assisted if donors can work together with mine-affected States and the non-governmental-organization community to tackle resolutely the humanitarian challenge posed by anti-personnel mines. We are fortunate to have the United Nations Mine Action Service to assist in bringing coherence, collaborative will and resources to this effort. As we have repeatedly stated elsewhere, the Convention provides the comprehensive framework for action against landmines. That is why we continue to pursue its universalization.

The insecurity and widespread human suffering caused by the proliferation and vast accumulations of small arms and light weapons are troubling, despite the fact that these are legitimate weapons used by States for legitimate purposes. Yet huge quantities of these weapons appear to move unchecked from region to region and to fall into the wrong hands, with negative consequences for regional stability, local communities and individuals.

We share the concern of others that the small-arms and light-weapons issue must be resolved. The challenge is to define the problem, which has many complexities — political, legal, technical, economic and social. There are a number of efforts under way to explore the various dimensions of the issue and to develop viable, practical policy options. We look forward with great interest to participating in those efforts. The international community, informed by the conclusions of that reflection, should be able to take effective action.

The acquisition of large quantities of conventional weapons beyond the needs of legitimate defence continues to pose a fundamental challenge to international security. We recognize that States have a sovereign right to protect themselves. However, such strategic decisions should not prompt or fuel regional or interregional arms races. In our view, the process of ensuring regional stability involves three steps, namely, transparency, dialogue and restraint. It is more urgent than ever that we take full advantage of the tools at our disposal to ensure this stability. We emphasize the continued importance of States' utilizing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a mechanism for pursuing those three steps. We also congratulate the States members of the European Union on their contribution, as one of several regional contributions to enhanced responsibility and transparency, through the adoption of a code of conduct on the export of conventional arms.

The final issue we wish to highlight is that of the non-militarization of outer space. This is a fundamental strategic issue that should be addressed as we prepare to enter the new millennium. An increasing number of States are demonstrating a capability to make use of outer space. Many States have been making large investments in developing space-based capability in areas such as communications and surveillance for both civilian and military purposes. To be quite clear, we have no desire to change this reality. Quite the contrary: Canada is a vast country that has made large investments in and enjoys substantial benefits from the peaceful uses of outer space. We want to ensure that this opportunity continues to exist for all States. However, weapons based in outer space by one or more States would undermine an important, indeed vital, aspect of international security. There is at present no international regime to ensure against this possible abuse of outer space. To that end, Canada has formally proposed that the security of all States would be enhanced through the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the militarization of outer space. We believe that this is an issue that deserves urgent consideration. We regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to take action on our proposal this year. We hope it will be in a position to do so in 1999.

In 1998, we have witnessed developments in the sphere of international security, some encouraging and some very disturbing. The nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime is not just a collection of documents. It is a body of politically and legally binding treaties, beginning with the NPT. These instruments — both the norms they create and the practical effects of their vigorous implementation — must be defended and, when challenged, upheld. The regime can be maintained and enhanced only with the active support of all States concerned. We can never avoid or prevent challenges to such a regime. The ultimate test is in the quality and integrity of the response to those challenges. Without these treaties, the security of each and every State would be significantly diminished. We believe that 1998 will be seen as a turning point in the history of international security. It will be seen as the year in which the regime was fundamentally challenged. It is our firm belief that it will also be seen as the year in which the regime survived that challenge. It is up to us, the international community, to ensure that this happens.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): Mr. Chairman, at the outset I would like to warmly congratulate you on your election to preside over the First Committee. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership the Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, who skilfully conducted the work of the First Committee.

Turkey, like many countries, is committed to the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. This goal should be pursued with realism through a balanced approach that encompasses steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms. Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends primarily on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. To be effective, any disarmament or arms control measures must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned, without upsetting the global strategic balance. They must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty, misunderstanding and insecurity. Thus, adequate verification and transparency are two fundamental principles of disarmament.

We believe that the spread of nuclear weapons would undermine the security of all nations and that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) plays a critical role in preventing such spread. For that the purpose, the NPT, by establishing a global form of nuclear non-proliferation, is one of the most important treaties of all time.

Turkey has been an ardent supporter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and of its full implementation since its inception. While strictly abiding by the provisions of the Treaty, we have constantly encouraged all countries to accede to it with a view to giving more vigour to the appeal directed to nuclear-weapon States for rapid progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the recent decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to start negotiations concerning the fissile material cut-off treaty. We look forward to the early conclusion of those negotiations.

With regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, Turkey has traditionally supported the establishment of such zones wherever possible and practically feasible. Since the establishment of such zones has a direct bearing on the security of States within the defined regions and on the existing military balance, the desire for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should necessarily come from all the countries in the zone, and the principle of undiminished security should be strictly observed.

Concerning nuclear tests, Turkey signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on the day it was opened for signature, and it has already been submitted to the Parliament for ratification. We also contributed actively to the establishment of the CTBT Organization, and we are making every effort to fulfil our commitments to the International Monitoring System.

Turkey has made a number of statements in which it has repeatedly voiced its concerns about the nuclear tests conducted in South Asia in May. We have noted that these developments may have serious repercussions on regional and global security and stability. We sincerely hope that these tests will not lead to a new nuclear arms race. We are encouraged by the announcements of the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India indicating the readiness of both of their Governments to work towards the conclusion of discussions and their respective signings of the CTBT. We appreciate their heeding the concerns of the international community.

The year we are leaving behind has brought little that is positive to the global proliferation predicament, which we all seek to bring under control. Today as never before, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a growing, tangible threat facing all our nations. In 1998, the menace of missile proliferation has taken a new turn with the successive flight tests in South-East Asia and in the Middle East. As a country situated in a region that is vulnerable to the high risks of proliferation, we have followed these developments with concern. In the light of the negative impact of such events on regional and international security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery has become an even more pressing agenda item for international peace and security.

The Middle East is one of the regions where the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery poses a tangible threat. Turkey's geographical proximity to the region requires us to view with vigilance the evolution in the scale of the threat and to take part in collective efforts aimed at devising measures to reverse this alarming trend.

In the light of those considerations, Turkey has become a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Missile Technology Control Regime dealing with non-proliferation matters. My country also actively contributes to international efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the CTBT. My country has also expressed its desire to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Australian Group and the Zangger Committee. We have already adjusted our national legislation to meet the requirements of the NSG.

It is Turkey's desire that all countries — first in our region and then globally — come to share the goals of non-proliferation and work collectively towards their achievement. One of our policy objectives is to encourage actual and potential suppliers to act with maximum restraint in the transfer of sensitive items that could lead to proliferation, especially in regions of concern.

Turkey has ratified both the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons, without any reservations. It is evident that present international agreements to prevent the development and spread of biological and toxin weapons are far from meeting today's requirements. In addition to the obvious dangers posed by the existence of biological and chemical weapons, the possibility of their exploitation by terrorist organizations is a constant threat to the international community. Therefore, the conclusion of a protocol that would help strengthen and promote the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention is essential for regional and global peace. With this understanding, we have from the very beginning supported the Australian initiative to hold an unofficial meeting at the ministerial level with a view to giving impetus to the work of the Ad Hoc Group that has been negotiating the protocol to the BWC. We were pleased to see that that meeting was held at the United Nations last month. We also believe in the value of a further high-level meeting to be held in 1999 to take into account the developments in the Ad Hoc Group.

Turkey is fully conscious of the human suffering and casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. However, the security situation around Turkey is distinctly different from that faced by the proponents of the Ottawa process. It is also a fact that mines are being used indiscriminately by terrorist organizations. These objective factors preclude Turkey's signature of the Ottawa Convention at this stage. We keep an open mind, however, towards an eventual ban, to be achieved in stages. This approach would correspond to the evolutionary character of Turkey's policy regarding anti-personnel landmines. With the humanitarian aspects of the question in mind, in January 1996 we put into effect a national moratorium banning the sale and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. I am pleased to inform the Committee that, as a renewed expression of Turkey's determination to contribute to the ongoing efforts of the international community aimed at preventing the casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines and of its commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the relevant international instruments in this field, we have today announced Turkey's decision to extend the moratorium for another three years following its expiration.

We are also developing a number of bilateral initiatives with some of our neighbours to establish regimes for keeping common borders free from anti-personnel landmines and preventing their use in border areas in the future. To this end, we have already initiated contacts with Bulgaria and Georgia. These developments, we believe, could contribute to the programme for mine action prepared during the Ottawa Conference.

In the field of conventional arms control, Turkey continues to regard the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as the cornerstone of European security and stability. It has, in fact, led to the elimination of a very large number of weapons, under international supervision. Turkey shares the general understanding that the CFE Treaty needs to be adapted to the new security conditions in Europe. Given the indivisibility of security, it is our firm belief that the adapted Treaty should satisfy not only one country or region but all 30 States parties. It should also safeguard and promote the Treaty's objectives, viability and effectiveness.

The CFE flank regime, insofar as Turkey's security is concerned, constitutes the heart of the Treaty. Its preservation is therefore a vital goal for us. Throughout the adaptation process, Turkey will continue to work in a constructive spirit to ensure that the flank regime is reconciled with the adapted CFE in a manner satisfactory to all States parties.

Turkey, cognizant of the serious threat to international peace and security posed by the illicit trade in small arms, fully supports the efforts made in that field in international forums. In that respect, Turkey, which voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 52/38 J, fully supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade, as envisaged in paragraph 4 of that resolution. Turkey believes that such a conference will make it possible to have an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the illicit arms trade.

At this juncture, we would like to state that the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298) constitutes an important and comprehensive contribution to the treatment of the subject. Although the connection between drug-trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms, so present in regional conflicts, is mentioned in the report, Turkey believes that, given its significance, this question should be dealt with more extensively. In addition, my country is of the opinion that in the recommendations section of the report it would be beneficial to refer to the need to include small arms in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also support the other initiatives concerning small arms and light weapons that offer better prospects for new and improved international cooperation.

Turkey welcomes the important decisions adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee and on revitalizing, rationalizing and streamlining the work of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that we will reach an early conclusion on both matters.

As in the past, my country is ready to participate in the discussions of the First Committee in a constructive manner with the goal of removing the seeds of instability and insecurity.

Mr. Ulland (Norway): Let me first join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Your skills and long experience in this field will no doubt ensure constructive and productive work, and I can assure you of our cooperation and support.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues continue to be a primary preoccupation of the international community. The best way to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons is through the realization that the acquisition of such weapons does not serve the political or security interests of a State. It is for this reason that international cooperation in efforts to resolve local and regional conflicts should be seen as a major contribution to non-proliferation. The underlying causes of conflict should therefore be addressed in the context of non-proliferation efforts and nuclear-disarmament negotiations in order to remove the incentives for going nuclear.

The events in South Asia earlier this year have accentuated the interrelationship between an unstable regional security environment and the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The decisions of India and Pakistan to carry out underground nuclear tests are in clear defiance of international norms and constitute a serious threat to the global nuclear-non-proliferation regime and to peace and stability in the entire region. We believe that India and Pakistan would be acting in their own best interests by abandoning their nuclear-weapons programmes and by complying with the norms established by the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We have noted India's and Pakistan's statements in the General Assembly announcing their intention to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we urge both countries to become parties to the Treaty without delay or conditions. We would like to see them take similar action with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The nuclear-weapon States have an obligation, enshrined in the NPT, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. Efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear weapons should be intensified and pursued with determination. The codification of the systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons undertaken by the United States and the Russian Federation are an example of a nuclear-weapon State living up to this obligation. We hope to see this process continue, and we call upon the Russian Federation to ratify the START II agreement so that negotiations on START III can commence as soon as START II enters into force. Further concrete progress demonstrated by the nuclear-weapon States would be welcome.

We also welcome the measures taken by the Government of the United Kingdom in the context of the strategic-defence review as valuable contributions to nuclear disarmament. We have taken note of recent initiatives on nuclear disarmament by several countries. We value inputs and ideas which are realistic and contribute constructively to progress in this important field.

Our ultimate goal remains complete nuclear disarmament. That goal can best be achieved by the promotion of progressive steps towards the elimination of these weapons. One important and urgent step in this regard is to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Such a ban is a necessary component of a comprehensive system of increased controls of these materials. We welcome the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile-material cut-off treaty. A treaty cutting the fissile-material stockpiles available for use in nuclear would be a significant contribution to the achievement of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We look forward to contributing to the negotiations, which should start at the beginning of the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the negotiating mandate should be confined to the subject of production of fissile material. At the same time, it is important to address the issue of past production and existing stockpiles in an appropriate manner. In our view, this issue can best be dealt with outside the negotiating framework, in a separate, parallel and voluntary process designed to enhance transparency and build confidence in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are pleased to note that the United States and the Russian Federation agreed at the summit meeting held at Moscow in early September to commence work on an ambitious programme for the management and disposition of stockpiles of plutonium for nuclear weapons. This example demonstrates what can be achieved through a voluntary process. We hope that this initiative can be expanded to the multilateral level, thus making possible close cooperation with other countries possessing a nuclear capability.

The issue of management and disposition of weapons-grade fissile material should be seen as a central part of nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We believe that there would be merit in voluntary measures that would increase transparency on holdings of plutonium and highly enriched uranium through reporting, inspection and safeguard procedures, with a view to introducing an agreed, monitored net reduction in these stockpiles.

Transparency as a confidence-building measure should apply to all States with a nuclear capability, but for obvious reasons the primary burden would be on the nuclear-weapon States. In order to trigger discussions on this issue, Norway has submitted a working paper proposing four successive steps to deal with the issue of transparency. As a first step, the nuclear Powers could, on a voluntary basis, provide detailed information on their stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. A second step could be to ensure cooperative measures to clarify and confirm those declarations. As a third step, the nuclear Powers could permit international inspection of their stocks, and, as a fourth step, agreed monitored net reductions from those stockpiles could be introduced. In addition, consistent and stringent international standards of accounting and security for fissile materials could be established. This proposal concerning voluntary transparency measures for the management and disposition of fissile material may serve as a useful model in dealing with the issue of past production and existing stockpiles in a separate process that would be complementary to the fissile-material cut-off treaty negotiations.

The fissile-material cut-off treaty must include a credible verification regime. In our view, such a regime should provide the same degree of assurance with regard to compliance as other non-proliferation and arms control agreements. Considerations of principle and practical applications suggest that the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the existing expert control regimes should be used as a basis when drawing up the verification arrangements for this treaty.

A fissile-material cut-off treaty may be seen as a tool for capping the amount of material available for nuclear weapons. Similarly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty may be regarded as its qualitative counterpart in preventing the future development of qualitatively new explosives. It is important that the States parties provide the necessary funding for the continued build-up of the provisional Technical Secretariat to make it fully operative as soon as possible. We welcome the fact that 150 countries have signed the Treaty and that 17 of them have ratified it so far. We also welcome the ratification by two of the nuclear-weapon States, the United Kingdom and France. Norway intends to ratify the Treaty in the course of this year. We must make every effort to ensure that the Treaty enters into force on the earliest possible date, and we strongly support the call for a conference in accordance with article XIV, paragraph 2 of the Treaty to discuss measures to speed up the process.

Norway attaches great importance to the IAEA's efforts to strengthen the process of nuclear non-proliferation by improving the effectiveness of the comprehensive safeguards system. We welcome the approval by the Board of Governors of the model additional protocol as a result of the 93+2 process, which enhances the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities.

Last year, Norway started the internal process of preparing for the conclusion of an additional protocol based on the model protocol, and we have now entered into consultations with the Secretariat for that purpose. We urge the broadest possible adherence to this new, binding international legal instrument.

International trafficking in nuclear material is a matter of international concern. Norway is actively involved in various projects to strengthen systems for the prevention and detection of illegal transactions involving such material. We appreciate the initiatives taken by the IAEA in the matter, and we recommend that those efforts be intensified. It is important that initiatives in this field include assistance to various countries to establish national legal frameworks and transparency networks that will make detection and enforcement more effective.

We welcome the accession of Brazil to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the most important international instrument for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. The enhanced review process begun in 1995 provides an instrument for addressing these issues and for achieving progress. Unfortunately, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT proved to be, quite frankly, a failure. Attempts to begin substantial discussions on key issues did not succeed. No recommendations could be forwarded to the third session. The challenge now, we believe, is to lay the groundwork for a more constructive dialogue on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In order to get the enhanced review process back on track, the parties must act in accordance with the commitments and obligations undertaken in 1995.

The international community has a legitimate interest in being kept informed about progress achieved, as well as about difficulties and challenges encountered in the process of nuclear disarmament. Although we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should not be mandated to negotiate nuclear-weapons reductions, we do see a definite role for the Conference in questions relating to nuclear disarmament and nuclear arms control, in addition to the negotiations of the fissile material cut-off treaty. By establishing a procedure for reporting on nuclear issues and policies, the Conference on Disarmament could serve as an important forum for discussion and exchange of information. This would give the nuclear-weapon States an opportunity to provide information, both on the results achieved by unilateral and bilateral initiatives and on their nuclear policies, thus demonstrating their commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament. Increased transparency on nuclear issues would enhance confidence and reduce distrust. We believe that the proposals already submitted on this issue should be considered carefully and used as a basis for further dialogue.

The Conference on Disarmament is in urgent need of reform. Reform issues such as membership, working methods and agenda carry a great deal of political substance and have a direct impact on the matters of substance before the Conference. In its present form and with its present methods of work, the Conference on Disarmament has not managed to keep pace with the changing security and disarmament agenda. We are disappointed that the Conference was not able to expand its membership during the 1998 session. Its relevance, credibility and political legitimacy are closely linked to its membership. In our view, the Conference would benefit from broader representation and a greater degree of openness. In today's world, it is not possible to deny or to justify denying any State membership in the Conference on Disarmament. It is politically unacceptable to continue to exclude countries from membership in a forum when they contribute to its funding. The Conference on Disarmament's task is to negotiate instruments establishing international norms that are universally adhered to. Thus, all States must have a right to take part in such negotiations on an equal footing. Having failed this year, the Conference on Disarmament must address the issue of expansion at the very beginning of next year's session.

The present working methods of the Conference on Disarmament do not facilitate its smooth operation. Too much time is spent on endless discussions on the reappointment of the Special Coordinator, on the re-establishment of ad hoc committees and on the adoption of a formal, seemingly unchanging agenda. Norway supports the continued endeavours to reform the Conference on Disarmament in order to secure the future of that body.

The fortieth ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines was a significant step towards a world free of anti-personnel mines. The remarkable speed of the ratification process clearly reflects the strong international will to resolve the humanitarian problems caused by these weapons. The Convention established an international framework for further comprehensive efforts towards this end; considerable resources have been mobilized for humanitarian demining and assistance to mine victims. Allocating resources to mine action within the framework of the Convention is a means of promoting universalization. Norway is contributing $120 million to these efforts over a five-year period.

We are grateful for the generous offer by the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of the States parties in Maputo in May 1999. It is highly appropriate that this first annual meeting under the Convention will take place in Africa. No other continent is more severely afflicted by the scourge of anti-personnel mines, and a meeting in an African State will provide a suitable venue for discussing the implementation of the Convention and furthering its objectives.

Every day we receive reports of violent and horrifying acts involving the use of small arms. At the same time, we do have a number of promising initiatives to control the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled use of small arms, which are now being launched, particularly at the regional level. The Inter-American Convention negotiated through the Organization of American States (OAS) to combat the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms requires States, *inter alia*, to strengthen border controls, mark firearms and share information on weapon producers, dealers, importers and exporters. Another welcome development is the recently adopted European Union Code of Conduct on arms exports, which sets out minimum criteria, to which Norway has also subscribed, and, last, but not least, the moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light weapons in West Africa is unique in the way it combines security, development and disarmament concerns in a region plagued by violent intra-State conflicts. The success of the West African moratorium will depend on the support of the international community for the implementation arrangements. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Coordinated Action on Small Arms (CASA), and we note the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host a United Nations conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Norway is in favour of convening such a conference, but we believe it is essential to discuss further the exact scope of the conference and whether it should address only illicit trafficking. Before a decision is made, we should secure broader international support and a clearer understanding of the focus of the exercise.

Although a great deal of progress has been made, it is necessary to broaden the common international understanding of the concrete action needed to prevent and reduce the excessive proliferation and uncontrolled use of small arms. In recognition of the need for greater coordination of these many ongoing initiatives, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited representatives from 20 Governments to take part in a dialogue on small arms in Oslo in July. For the first time, Governments from all regions actually agreed to intensify and harmonize efforts in an effective and coherent manner.

In the Oslo document, a common understanding was reached on the main concerns and challenges. A number of action areas have been identified, such as combating illicit trafficking in small arms, tighter control of illegal transfers and the urgent need for the reduction of small arms in war-torn societies. The Canadian and Norwegian Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Vollebeck, hosted a follow-up ministerial special information briefing on small arms in New York on 25 September. The interest shown was overwhelming. About 100 countries were represented, and the meeting was attended by foreign ministers and other ministers.

The Norwegian Government hopes that the Oslo document will help broaden international support for action against the excessive accumulation of small arms. In a further effort to be practical, Norway announced in the General Assembly some weeks ago the launching of a trust fund to support the prevention and reduction of the proliferation of small arms. We encourage other countries to contribute to the trust fund.

Of all the categories of weapons of mass destruction, biological agents are the only ones that are not subject to an international verification regime. Rapid scientific advances in the field of biotechnology underline the urgency of establishing credible and legally binding verification measures in this field. Norway attaches great importance to a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group in Geneva on a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons. Much of the work on technical aspects has already been done. What we need to focus on now is finding the necessary political solutions to the outstanding issues. Issues such as declarations, visits and provisions for rapid and effective investigations will be fundamental elements of a credible and effective future verification protocol. In elaborating provisions to cover these issues, we should be in close liaison with industry to establish targeted and viable mechanisms that meet our objectives. However, we must avoid imposing an undue burden on industry. Norway, for its part, is prepared to do its utmost to contribute to an early and successful conclusion of the negotiations in Geneva.

Norway welcomes the important decisions taken at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee, as well as on the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We regret, however, that only limited steps could be agreed. Reform of the First Committee remains a priority. Like others, Norway would like to see steps taken at this session for the further rationalization of the Committee's work.

Mr. Alborzi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am sure that under your able chairmanship the Committee will have a successful session this year. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the other officers of the Committee as well.

The past few years have witnessed unprecedented success in some areas of arms control and disarmament. The conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its entry into force, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the commencement of negotiations on a fissile-material cut-off treaty and the new impetus with regard to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are all signs that should make us optimistic about the future of the disarmament process. However, in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, two negative events have occurred. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia and the failure of the 1998 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have seriously affected the non-proliferation regime. We believe that the non-proliferation regime needs to be safeguarded and strengthened. In the meantime, the recent tests revealed that the existing non-proliferation regime can no longer serve as the sole basis for guaranteeing a safe future for a world free from the fear of nuclear threat.

For decades, numerous calls for nuclear disarmament have received little attention, and, regrettably, there has been no progress in this regard. Even the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice emphasizing the legal obligation to engage in a genuine effort for the elimination of nuclear weapons has yet to be heeded. This indifference to the grave concern of the international community over the risk of nuclear weapons has grave consequences for international peace and security. The ignoring of the desire of the international community and the absence of concrete action on nuclear disarmament played a role in the recent development in South Asia. The reactions to that development by Governments, parliaments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and public opinion demonstrated the global wish for a world free of nuclear weapons, an objective which deserves to meet with a favourable reaction from the nuclear-weapon States.

Nuclear weapons serve no purpose today other than to antagonize and to invite tension and conflict. They are a persistent menace to international peace and security. They continue to inhibit the genuine confidence so essential to reforming international relations and enhancing cooperation. We should not allow the optimism derived from the promising developments of the early years of the 1990s to give way to skepticism at the beginning of the new century. The threat of nuclear arms should be eliminated once and for all.

The non-nuclear parties to the NPT have expressed their will on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament through the agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the conclusion of the CTBT. Following the conclusion of the CTBT, they expected that flexibility to be reciprocated by others through an agreement on the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament. To that end, various proposals were made, but they have yet to receive a proper response. My delegation reiterates its desire that, as the highest priority, the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament should commence multilateral negotiations in 1999 on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time-frame, including a nuclear-weapons convention.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the universality of the NPT and to the full implementation of all its provisions, as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. Pending the conclusion of a convention on nuclear disarmament, that Treaty must be complied with by all Members of the United Nations. The strengthened review process established by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT has a crucial role to play in this regard. In this context, my delegation has proposed the creation of an open-ended standing committee, which would work intersessionally to follow up recommendations concerning the implementation of the NPT, to be agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty. It is our earnest hope that this proposal, which has the endorsement of the summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, will be supported by all parties to the NPT in the First Committee.

At its 1998 session the Conference on Disarmament decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been in favour of starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as a step in a phased programme of nuclear disarmament. Thus, we decided to go along with the decision on the basis of the presidential statement and the statement of the Group of 21, and on the understanding that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee will be guided equally by the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are of the view that the conclusion of the fissile material cut-off treaty should provide for the promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It should reduce the possibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and should prevent the qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

My delegation welcomes the recent statements by India and Pakistan indicating that both countries are moving towards adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). According to article XIV of the CTBT, a conference should be held to consider the ratification status of the States listed in the Treaty. To ensure the Treaty's universality, the timing of the conference should be such as to guarantee as wide a participation as possible. Our hope is that the Convention will have entered into force before that conference is convened. My Government, for its part, intends to expedite the process of ratification and to submit its instrument of ratification as soon as possible. Taking into account that any decision taken by the conference will seriously affect the interests of the States referred to in article XIV of the Convention, we consider that the full participation of States in the conference is imperative.

It is widely recognized that the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world constitutes an important confidence-building and disarmament measure that enhances both regional and global security. This was reflected in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in many other relevant United Nations documents.

The recent development underscores once again the importance of giving serious attention to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a step towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament, particularly in sensitive regions such as the Middle East. The clandestine nuclear programmes of Israel, the only non-party to the NPT in the region, continue to pose an imminent threat to the region's peace and security. It is a proven fact that a selective approach on nuclear non-proliferation will have disastrous effects. Hence, the international community should exert every pressure on Israel to immediately abandon its nuclear programmes, to accede to the NPT without any preconditions and to put its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation issued a joint statement on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East on 16 July 1998. The joint statement urges all parties directly concerned to give serious consideration to practical and urgent measures necessary for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolution. Other nuclear States should do the same and exert pressure on Israel to stop endangering the region and international peace and security by calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It is expected that the United Nations Disarmament Commission would be able to make a momentous contribution to that end by submitting concrete recommendations and guidelines in this regard to the General Assembly. The recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, South Africa, called for the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Main Committee II of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT to consider and recommend proposals on the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. That proposal can provide a suitable framework for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We welcome the fact that the number of States adhering to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has increased to 117. However, serious initiatives are required to realize the universality of this highly important Convention. It is also a source of concern that a year after the Convention's entry into force many important issues, including articles X and XI, are yet to be resolved. Intricate and extensive means of verification, coupled with provisions to monitor free trade in chemicals among member States, have been part of the basic concept of the Convention. In fact, the conclusion of the Convention became possible when commitments were made in the text of the Convention, as well as in the formal statement of the Australian Group on 8 August 1992, that the restrictions on the transfer of equipment, materials and technology not prohibited by the Convention would not be maintained by the States parties. In the meantime, while parallel export-control regimes continue to work against the development of the developing parties to the CWC, according to the reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the chemicals listed under schedules 2 and 3 of the Convention are still exported to non-parties to the Convention. This issue needs to be resolved in a satisfactory manner if the Convention is to be a success.

The same is true for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its annexed protocol under consideration. At the informal ministerial meeting here in New York, which was initiated by the Government of Australia, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi reiterated the full support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the strengthening of the verification regime of the BWC and for accelerating the negotiations on the protocol. I would like to add that the current discussions on the establishment of a verification regime are bound to succeed if they are coupled with a firm commitment to the free flow of materials, equipment and technology for peaceful use among Member States, an undertaking with a direct impact on the development of the developing countries in the field of health-related science. Such assurances are essential to reward States that adhere to the protocol and to make a clear distinction between those who stand for a universal instrument and those who prefer to stand aside with their national, and sometimes questionable, programmes. We would refrain from repeating the NPT story.

The illicit trafficking and circulation of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to the general population and to national and regional security. They also contribute to the destabilization of States. This is a complex problem which deserves to be addressed in a serious manner by individual countries as well as by the international community. It is encouraging that the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other actors in international society have mobilized all resources to tackle this issue. In our region, the situation in Afghanistan is a very good example. The heinous massacres and systematic ethnic and religious persecutions that we are witnessing today are the consequences of small arms in the hands of criminals, terrorists and drug smugglers. My Government, as an active member of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, supports any initiative by the United Nations and individual countries to deal with this issue.

I cannot conclude without highlighting the engagement of non-governmental organizations in disarmament affairs as a promising development. Non-governmental organizations are acting as catalysts in promoting the culture of peace and strengthening international peace and security. Their valuable contributions, particularly in the field of the elimination of nuclear weapons, are a source of satisfaction and deserve appreciation.

Fortunately, the re-established Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, has established a constructive collaboration between the Department and non-governmental organizations. In our view, the active participation of non-governmental organizations in the collective efforts of the Members of the United Nations in the field of disarmament can make the goal of preserving peace and security more attainable.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call upon the representative of Belarus, who will speak on behalf of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus): At the outset, I should like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our warmest congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee. Our delegation is confident that under your wise and able leadership the Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

On behalf of the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Martynov, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Commission for its 1998 session, contained in document A/53/42. As in earlier years, the report consists of four chapters and an annex containing the results of the deliberations on various disarmament items on the agenda during the 1998 substantive session. The first three chapters contain the introduction, the organizational portion and the list of documents. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations, and annexes set out the reports of the subsidiary bodies, which duly reflect the status of deliberations that the Commission has achieved this year.

The Disarmament Commission organized its 1998 session in accordance with the mandate set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, as well as the guidelines set by the reform programme, entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which were unanimously adopted by the Commission in 1990. It should be pointed out that, pursuant to the reform programme, the Commission at its organizational session decided to include three substantive items on its agenda: the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements clearly arrived at among the States of the region concerned, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. Working Groups were established to deal with these agenda items. In addition, the Commission established a Committee of the Whole to deal with the issue of prioritization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission in accordance with the request contained in General Assembly resolution 52/12 B. Items 3 and 5 were in their second year of deliberation, and the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament had to be concluded this year.

The consideration of agenda item 3 has clearly demonstrated that the decision to introduce the nuclear-weapon-free-zone issue into the agenda of the United Nations Disarmament Commission was well timed, and, as in previous years, the convergence of positions on various elements of such zones was clearly visible. However, the differences which remained are rooted in the national-security considerations of the Member States. As a result, the regional and group alliances did not predominate, and purely national positions constituted the basis for the approach of participants to the issue as a whole. Although the Group considered four elements — general overview, purposes and objectives, principles and guidelines and the way ahead — the in-depth consideration of the chapter on principles and guidelines was set aside for the 1999 substantive session. The discussions within Working Group I revealed the growing worldwide support for nuclear-weapon-free zones. Increasingly, such zones are viewed as a contribution to the overall international climate in which the attainment of general and complete disarmament becomes more feasible. There was little argument over the fact that, based on transparency and free exchange of information, such zones foster greater understanding between neighbouring States, encourage cooperation among them and strengthen international peace and security and regional stability. It was also agreed that the scope of all existing and future nuclear-weapon-free zones contains common elements which should be focused on in the coming year.

The deliberations of Working Group II on the issue of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were undoubtedly the highlight of this year's session. Measured against the background of the high expectations, the result of the negotiations was most unfortunate, as the Group was not able to conclude the item by reaching a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session owing to the particular position of certain delegations. As representatives are aware, the division of views occurred with regard to such fundamental issues as the validity and role of the Final Document of the first special session in the current disarmament environment and the priorities for the remaining decades and beyond. It should be noted that

States demonstrated flexibility and were ready to work towards an agreement and to adopt the Chairman's non-paper as a basis for compromise. As the discussions progressed, the differences in the positions of the groups of States narrowed somewhat. Unfortunately, the existing gap between those positions could not be fully closed. Despite this evident setback, a realistic optimism still exists that by keeping the issue alive it would become possible, through continued efforts and goodwill, to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion, hopefully at the current session of the General Assembly.

In Working Group III, on conventional weapons, it was decided that the Chairman's paper of 1997 would serve as a basis for the deliberations. Delegations further agreed that the core issue was to establish guidelines for post-conflict practical disarmament measures with a view to the consolidation of peace. Many delegations also felt that other types of conventional-disarmament measures, such as regional arms moratoriums, regional arms registers and codes of conduct for weapons transfers, would assist in strengthening stability. As a result, the bulk of the Group's time was spent on setting out a list of practical disarmament measures. However, the attempt on the part of the Chairman to introduce language that would place the measures in the greater context of his report was not accepted by countries which felt that mention of peace accords was outside the mandate of the Group. Consequently, the Chairman annexed his version of guidelines, whose content was the subject of little or no discussion.

In this connection, the current Chairman of the Disarmament Commission would like to make a personal observation. The Working Group will face a serious task in 1999 in order to have the guidelines agreed and adopted in three weeks. Consequently, it would be desirable for the incoming chairman of the Working Group to conduct extensive consultations and prepare draft texts in advance, prior to the next session, to enable the Group to conclude its work in 1999 without delay.

As for the streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission with a view to its reform, this issue was discussed in the Committee of the Whole and was also dealt with in the Chairman's extensive informal consultations. The result of those deliberations was reflected in the final report of the Commission as the Chairman's text. It was also recognized that that text could serve as a basis for further deliberations. In this regard, the Chairman was strongly encouraged by delegations to continue his efforts, and, consequently, an intensive round of informal consultations prior to the resumed session of the First Committee produced a consensus text, which was adopted by the Committee and the General Assembly as decision 52/492. Thus, the General Assembly mandate, pursuant to its resolution 52/12 B, to review the work of the Commission with a view to its reform, has been successfully fulfilled, and the agreed set of measures will be implemented as of the year 2000.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to express gratitude to all delegations for their understanding and support. A special tribute should be paid to the officers of the Commission, in particular to the 8 Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur, Mr. Vice Skračić of Croatia, to the Chairmen of the three Working Groups — namely, Mr. Miguel Aguirre de Cárcer of Spain, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia and Ambassador Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda — for their hard work and imaginative and creative approach to the tasks entrusted to them by the Commission. The Chairman of the Disarmament Commission would also like to express his gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jin Yongjian of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and their staffs for their valuable assistance, and to the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya and his colleagues serving as the Secretaries of their Working Groups. His sincere appreciation is extended to all other members of the Secretariat who assisted the Commission in carrying out its task.

With these remarks, I should like to submit the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/53/42.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): May I first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. We know we are in excellent hands, and you can count on the full support of the New Zealand delegation.

On almost all fronts, this has been a significant, if not momentous, year. For those of us who set such high store by non-proliferation and disarmament, results have been mixed. Once again this year, there has been good and bad news. There were many positive developments, which we applaud. There is growing adherence to the strengthened safeguards measures established by the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which will make it far more difficult for illegal nuclear-weapons-development activity to proceed undetected. New Zealand was pleased to sign the Additional Protocol three weeks ago.

The widening adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a source of immense satisfaction for New Zealand. We are gratified that two nuclear-weapon States are now among the 21 ratifying States. Legislation to effect New Zealand's own ratification has had its second reading in Parliament and received unanimous support. We are on track to ratify before the end of the year.

We are delighted that the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines is now ready to enter into force, and we are determined to continue to play a part in ensuring that its objectives and its universalization are fulfilled. Legislation to effect New Zealand's ratification of this important new treaty is before Parliament.

The prize undoubtedly came with agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to begin substantive negotiations to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. This step was overdue, but welcome nonetheless. We regard it as essential for the Conference to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material as soon as possible early next year so that negotiations proper can get under way.

Designing a fissile-material treaty that will have the capacity to address both the non-proliferation and disarmament imperatives relating to fissile material will be no mean challenge. It will require some creative thinking and political will. One of our tasks will be to ensure that the controls to be put in place will justify international confidence. The treaty must be non-discriminatory and multilateral in its reach, and it will need to deliver cost-effective verification machinery. The goal will be to put in place a credible new international norm that will have the potential to underpin confidence in regions of tension and to enhance the process of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether.

Obviously, the contentious issue of stocks will need to be addressed in an appropriate way. We are realistic enough to appreciate that dealing with production and stocks may not be possible in a single instrument. One might have to follow the other. But sooner or later we shall have to attempt to integrate stocks if a comprehensive fissile-material ban is to become a permanent disarmament measure.

We are pleased that the Conference was able to undertake intensive consultations on nuclear issues. But another urgent priority next year must be to take a decision on establishing an appropriate subsidiary body to address nuclear disarmament. It is simply not acceptable for us that the Conference on Disarmament is unable to engage in deliberations on nuclear issues; nor is it creditable, given our collective international obligations.

Intensive consultations were a start, but are not good enough. We continue to believe that the Conference has a legitimate role to play in considering what steps might usefully be taken to underpin the START process. It must be possible to establish a mechanism that would not undermine that process. The aim can and must be to complement those efforts by adding value to them. A decision should be taken soon, or lingering frustration and division may creep back into the work of the Conference.

We are pleased, too, that a decision on a programme of work proved to be possible in the Conference on Disarmament after a period of inactivity and indecision the year before. The Conference excelled itself with an ambitious programme of substantive issues as well as reform. With hindsight, it was probably an overly ambitious menu, given the limited time the Conference has in any one year for deliberation and negotiations. Next year, it might do well to focus on a smaller range of priority issues. But a decision on work was nevertheless significant, and it demonstrates that this important body is still capable of pushing the global disarmament agenda forward.

We consider that the Conference should take a decision at the beginning of next year on expanding its membership, as recommended by the Special Coordinator. This is unfinished business in what must be an ongoing process of universalization of the Conference on Disarmament. New Zealand will continue to press for this outcome.

Reform of the workings of the Conference is equally overdue. This should not become a preoccupation or an alternative to substantive engagement, but the Conference should demonstrate some leadership in the way it operates. It is nonsense to us that unfinished work in one year cannot automatically be taken up in the beginning of the next year.

It is unacceptable, too, that the Conference, in its annual report, which is before us, was incapable of dealing factually with a critical development in 1998 of direct and immediate importance. The nuclear tests in South Asia early this year were the subject of intense debate in the Conference, and, at the request of Australia and New Zealand, a special plenary meeting of the Conference was held on 2 June to address the international implications of those tests. Yet the Conference was unable to include a factual reference to this special plenary meeting in its annual report, nor to the fact that 48 of its members and observers issued a joint statement condemning the tests. Precedent was one of the arguments offered to explain this failure, an argument that we reject. Precedent should be a measure, not a mantra.

The negotiations to design a verification protocol for biological weapons are inching forward, but progress has been far too slow. The Australian initiative of holding a ministerial meeting last month in New York was a constructive and creative way to add political impetus to these crucial negotiations. My Foreign Minister, The Right Honourable Don McKinnon, was pleased to act as Chairman at the ministerial meeting on behalf of his Australian colleague.

It has taken almost a quarter of a century after the entry into force of the original Biological Weapons Convention to design verification machinery. That is not a brilliant track record. We need to lift the game in these negotiations, and we very much hope that the protocol will be completed before the end of next year. We are committed to that goal. Our aim must be to deter and prevent violations of the Convention and to ensure compliance. We shall need to take into account the legitimate concerns of industry in this process. All aspects of the negotiating mandate will need to be fulfilled. New Zealand appreciates that some States parties that submit themselves to the Biological Weapons Convention's obligations in good faith may lack the scientific and technical means to uphold these obligations unaided. Evidence suggests that these problems come, not always from a lack of political will, but from a lack of knowledge of what to do. The negotiations should recognize this.

Unfortunately, the disarmament balance sheet this year was not good on all fronts. Another year has slipped by without ratification by the Russian Federation of START II. We regard the START process as hugely important. We also welcome the undertakings to proceed with START III and hope negotiations will get under way without delay.

Ratifications of the protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties remain incomplete. Addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms is a priority issue. There is an emerging consensus on the devastating effects that the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of these weapons are having, and we welcome the new initiatives which are seeking to address this urgent problem. A holistic approach, as outlined by South Africa in the Committee earlier this week, will be necessary to address the problem. Action will be needed at national, regional and international levels. We agree also that the way forward will require incremental action involving mutually reinforcing steps.

However, the exceptionally bad news this year, was the threat posed to the non-proliferation regime. A significant body blow to the regime was delivered with the decision by India and then Pakistan to undertake nuclear tests in May. Those tests were totally irreconcilable with the claims by both countries that they are committed to nuclear disarmament. Nor will we accept the argument, offered at the time, that the tests were undertaken because of the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament. That is a self-serving argument and has no currency. The tests were undertaken in pursuit of national interests and in the belief that security would be enhanced. Unfortunately, that has not been achieved. The approach India and Pakistan seemed determined to pursue in May belongs to a bygone age.

Indications conveyed recently in the General Assembly relating to signature of the CTBT offer some encouragement, but deeds and not words are what we are looking for when it comes to international norms and non-proliferation. We urge India and Pakistan to stop their nuclear-weapon-development programmes, to refrain from weaponization or from the deployment of nuclear weapons, to cease development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and to cease any further production of fissile material. We urge them to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and without condition and to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Along with many others, we are disappointed with the meagre outcome of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT in Geneva this year. Differences over how to deal with the Middle East issue in the NPT setting are most unfortunate. Political issues and differing expectations and perceptions of what the NPT review process can and should deliver were also factors at play in that Geneva meeting.

The NPT review process may be in trouble. Had it not been for differences over the Middle East issue, divisions over how the review process should deal with nuclear disarmament had the potential to lead to a similar result. One question now being asked is whether the decisions taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference are being downgraded or, worse still, are no longer regarded as binding. Minimalist interpretations of the 1995 review process will only take us backwards, not forward. New Zealand will continue to work with others in ensuring that the review process is successful.

We welcomed the increased transparency shown by the nuclear-weapon States at the April meeting of the Preparatory Committee, but some may have been left with the impression that this was offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Differences in perception over both the nature and the scope of the NPT review process will need to be resolved if it is to deliver the enhanced outcome agreed in 1995. A middle way must be found to deal with the reciprocal obligations of disarmament, on the one hand, and the imperatives of non-proliferation, on the other. One will not be possible without the other.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is absolutely fundamental. One imperative must be to ensure that the legitimate expectations of its members are not suppressed. But New Zealand rejects totally any suggestion that in some way the NPT might no longer be relevant. It is as essential and as indispensable as ever. We could not accept, and would reject totally, any suggestion that it might need to be revisited.

There can be no stepping back from the objective of complete disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. That is why New Zealand has joined Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, Sweden, Slovenia and South Africa in submitting a new draft resolution on nuclear disarmament in the Committee. We are doing so because we believe a new impetus must be given to the nuclear-disarmament process. This draft resolution reflects the views of the Canberra Commission and many other individuals and Governments that have given careful thought to how to move forward. We do not claim that this is a novel agenda, for it is not. Nor is it a hidden agenda. What we are putting forward in the Committee are simply the elements that are needed to make up a new agenda for progress on nuclear disarmament.

For too long, the debate on nuclear disarmament has tended to take place at the extremes. That has made it all too easy to place the issue into the "too hard" basket, and it has made it comfortable for some to dismiss calls for action on the basis of their being extravagant, confrontational or impossible to contemplate. We have had the classic situation where the perfect became the enemy of the good. This draft resolution calls for the implementation of some practical measures that can be taken now and in the near future. It advocates a step-by-step approach. It is realistic. It advocates mutually reinforcing steps. It does not stray into time-bound frameworks or attempt to put down deadlines, nor does it advocate take-it-or-leave-it conventions. The draft resolution seeks to move the debate in a new direction and onto a measured path where confidence, productive engagement and results can be delivered. It may not be a comfortable scenario for action, but it is not intended to be confrontational. Our aim is to secure the widest possible support for exploring ways to move forward collectively and constructively. The draft resolution is an inclusive endeavour and one on which we hope all Members of the United Nations are ready to engage.

Mr. Maidin (Brunei Darussalam): I would like to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee.

We are confident that with your vast experience you will be able to guide us to a successful conclusion at this year's session. Our congratulations go also to the other officers of the Committee. Let me assure you that we will give our full support to the work of the Committee.

The collapse of bipolarity has brought about an uncertain environment, with strategic gaps and new polarization, all of which have led to a new arms race. Nonetheless, progress has been made in various aspects of arms control and disarmament, particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction. The continuing and increased support by Members of the Organization offers the international community some optimism.We welcome and will continue to support initiatives undertaken by the international community to maintain international peace and security. The United Nations and its agencies have been instrumental in paving the way for greater international cooperation. This aspect is very significant in strengthening, as well as in consolidating, multilateral principles for disarmament.

We also welcome the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of two Ad Hoc Committees to negotiate effective international arrangements to ensure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and a treaty banning the production of fissile material. We hope that those Committees will lead to successful conclusions in achieving concrete and legally binding agreements.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world is a positive measure towards achieving the ultimate objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We also welcome proposals to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in Europe and Central Asia. The creation of these zones will further strengthen regional and international stability. The issuance of the joint declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda," by the Foreign Ministers of 8 nations last June is a significant development that merits our attention.

For many decades, very few countries have refused to acknowledge landmines and small arms as weapons of mass destruction. Their capacity to destroy or kill is not as great as other known weapons of mass destruction. In December of last year, most of us signed the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. This is another landmark in the history of disarmament, intended to ban the use of this type of weapon.

In addition, in recent years the international community has made tremendous efforts to tackle illicit arms transfers. Although there is still much to be done, we must continue to support these commendable efforts and work together to tackle this problem. We believe that the problem can best be addressed by building a global consensus on, for example, monitoring and controlling such transfers and on their links with trafficking in other contraband goods.

In our efforts to achieve a stable and peaceful world we have encountered many impediments; yet, with the cooperation of Member States, we have gradually overcome them. The road ahead is still full of such impediments, some old and some new. Negotiations are continuing in order to contain and address these problems and, where appropriate, to introduce relevant conventions.

As we rapidly approach the new millennium, we need to be more focused in our work. A peaceful world will be achieved only through the adherence of Member States to the international disarmament conventions and treaties. If we abide by such commitments, we are certain that we can achieve our goal of a world free from the scourge of weapons of mass destruction in the next millennium.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Your recognized experience and diplomatic skills, together with the dedication of the other officers of the Committee and the Secretariat, are assurances that we will enjoy success at this complicated session.

The establishment of an effective system of security as a component of the harmonious development of peoples must be based on shared values. An interdependent world requires that the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter be truly shared and observed by all the members of the international community. Argentina supports the ongoing increase in activities devoted to preventive diplomacy and the role of the Security Council in that regard. Argentina is continuing its customary contribution of human and financial resources to peacekeeping operations.

As we face the new millennium, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction must be a priority item on our agenda. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. The next Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the growing number of States that have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the decision to create verification machinery for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the decision in the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a cut-off treaty are all promising signs. In this connection, I would also like to note that on 23 September the Argentine Congress approved the CTBT and that we will soon be proceeding to ratification.

This progress is all very well and good, but it is still necessary for all States to renounce the nuclear option. They must give unequivocal guarantees that their nuclear capability will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. As Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella stated in the General Assembly a few weeks ago, Argentina was the first country that, after achieving a nuclear fuel capability, opted for the path of self-restraint early this decade.

As to the recent statements made by the authorities of India and Pakistan in the General Assembly with regard to their intention to take the necessary steps to accede to the CTBT, Argentina hopes that that will take place soon and that it will be done in keeping with the terms of Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

Argentina is following closely the situation in Iraq in the wake of the suspension of inspections by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and we appeal to Iraq to show a constructive spirit by reestablishing its relations with the United Nations in accordance with the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretary-General last February and in keeping with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Recent reports by UNSCOM and the IAEA give grounds for optimism with regard to the development of this situation.

In the area of conventional weapons, the most important thing is the imminent entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines. Argentina has begun the internal processes leading to approval of that instrument, and we hope to ratify it very soon.

The current international situation makes possible — and indeed necessary — greater cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with their respective statutes and in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. On the American continent, following important progress in the past decade in the area of human rights and economic integration, we are now establishing a system of security based on conflict prevention, cooperation and confidence-building. Argentina has invited other Governments in the region to participate in a regional dialogue on such specific issues as mutual confidence-building, the strengthening of transparency of information about military budgets and expenditures and the promotion of greater cooperation in defence and international security. Many of these ideas were embodied in the Declaration of San Salvador of February 1998. The regional conferences on confidence-building measures and security held at Santiago, Chile, in 1995 and at San Salvador in 1998 represent an important contribution to the modernization and deepening of the dialogue in our hemisphere. They promote inter-American cooperation to deal with common security problems. At the last session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), at Caracas in June 1998, we reiterated the Organization's mandate to modernize its institutions related to security.

The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials, which Argentina has supported since its inception, is now in the process of being approved by the National Congress. In April 1998, the heads of State of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile pledged to ratify the Convention and to make headway in developing a single mechanism to register buyers and sellers of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, a task that has been assigned to the ministers of internal Affairs of the respective countries.

This year, Argentina promoted the adoption of a Political Declaration by MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile establishing the region as a zone of peace, which was formally adopted at the Ushuaia Summit last July in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. The Declaration is of great importance. It expresses the common desire to continue along the path of cooperation on matters relating to security. The six countries also agreed to make the zone of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile a region free of anti-personnel landmines, a status to be extended eventually to include the entire Western Hemisphere. They also agreed to establish a common system and uniform methodology of data collection for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and information on military expenditures.

Lastly, the countries of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile agreed to support the work of the OAS Special Committee on Hemispheric Security and to foster cooperation among its members in the exclusively peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy and space technology.

A number of items on the disarmament and international security agenda are still pending. The establishment of a different climate requires full commitment, practical participation, political will and courage on the part of the entire international community if we are to take the necessary decisions.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your excellent knowledge, long experience and outstanding diplomatic skills will ensure the fruitful and successful outcome of the Committee's work at this session of the General Assembly. Our felicitations also go to the other elected officers of the Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during the work of the Committee.

We also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his comprehensive statement on the first day of the general debate in the Committee.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, when the international community faces the need to resolve a number of global challenges that are seriously threatening international peace and security, we should intensify our efforts to achieve further substantive progress in the process of nuclear disarmament, which should bring us closer to the realization of our supreme goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We must note that a number of great achievements have been made thus far. Our efforts have resulted in the adoption of such significant international documents as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines and other documents.

Regrettably, however, despite all of these achievements, we cannot say that we have been entirely successful in all our efforts to make our world a completely secure place in which to live. The truth is, that even now, almost a decade after the end of the cold war, the world situation remains fluid. Conflicts based on ethnic, religious or cultural grounds are still emerging in many parts of our planet, claiming innocent lives and precious resources, while the race in military expenditures knows no bounds.

Over the past few years, with the extension of the NPT and the CTBT, much international attention has been devoted to multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament processes. Universality has been and remains one of the essential goals of that effort. Indeed, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the adoption of the NPT were significant milestones in the disarmament process. They were supplements to and expansions of the corpus of international disarmament and arms-control law. They have a powerful symbolic value regarding concrete commitments by both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve the ultimate goal of a totally denuclearized world.

My country, the Republic of Uzbekistan, is among the first to have signed and ratified the CTBT. In our country, that document is considered to be an important step towards the implementation of the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as well as an effective instrument for a nuclear disarmament that will bring us closer to our ultimate aim. Uzbekistan welcomes the fact that 150 countries have signed the Treaty and 21 have ratified it. At the same time, my country's Government calls upon all other States that have not yet done so to sign and to ratify the Treaty, especially those 44 States whose ratifications are needed for the Treaty to come into force.

Meanwhile, when the world community is moving towards complete nuclear disarmament, new nuclear tests have been conducted. The Republic of Uzbekistan expresses its deep concern over the current situation in the South Asian region. The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have essentially damaged stability in the region and have put the entire process of nuclear disarmament under a serious threat.

I would like to reiterate my Government's position on this question: we resolutely condemn those acts, appeal to both countries to refrain from carrying out further nuclear tests and call upon them to sign the CTBT unconditionally. My Government welcomes the statements by the leaders of those two States made last month in the General Assembly, in which they expressed their intention to set a moratorium on nuclear tests. We hope that those words will be strengthened by concrete measures by the two countries.

My Government supports the decision of the Conference on Disarmament in August of this year to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. That treaty represents a starting point towards the realization of a long-held and high-priority goal of the Government of Uzbekistan. We are confident that the fissile material cut-off treaty is an important and logical step in the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament process, and it should be the next step after the conclusion of the CTBT. Let me assure the Committee of my Government's strong support for the process of maintaining and further strengthening the nuclear-disarmament regime.

Along with the universality of nuclear disarmament, it has become increasingly apparent that factors of regional insecurity can be significant obstacles to non-proliferation and disarmament and that they are, in fact, among the major causes of arms proliferation and arms races. Therefore, the regional dimensions of arms control and disarmament need to be addressed by the international community. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States within the region, and taking into account the special characteristics of regions, is an important contribution to non-proliferation, disarmament and, above all, international security.

While certain international efforts depend on broad international cooperation, the trend in recent years towards nuclear-weapon-free zones is evidence of the significance of regional initiatives in advancing the cause of global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Such zones now cover nearly the whole of the southern hemisphere, in addition to Antarctica, the seabed and outer space. My delegation also supports the development of new concepts for States whose geographical situation makes it difficult for them to join existing or prospective nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, we wish to recognize Mongolia's initiative in promoting the recognition of single-State nuclear-weapon-free zones.

I am delighted to note that the issue of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia has secured its deserved spot in the international disarmament agenda. The idea initiated by the countries of the region was warmly welcomed by the international community. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and welcomed its indefinite extension in 1995. I believe that delegations are aware that, in conformity with the provisions of the NPT, *inter alia*, its article VII and paragraphs 5 to 7 of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the leaders of the five Central Asian States, in the Almaty Declaration of 28 February 1997, expressed a unanimous opinion on the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and called upon all States to support that idea. The political will of the States of the region was reiterated in the statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of five States of the region, which was adopted at Tashkent on 15 September 1997.

I should like to note with satisfaction the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 52/38 S on 9 December 1997, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", in which the General Assembly called upon all States to support this initiative and requested the Secretary-General, within existing resources, to provide assistance to the Central Asian States in the preparation of the form and elements of a future treaty.

Since the adoption by consensus of the General Assembly resolution, we have made considerable progress in realizing this initiative. In keeping with the provisions of the resolution, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has provided the regional States with substantive advice on the preparation of a draft treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. To date, the group of regional experts established with the financial and organizational assistance of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, has held two meetings for the consideration of the form and elements of a future regional treaty. The process of dialogue among the Central Asian countries with nuclear-weapon States on the elements of the future treaty was continued at the Bishkek Consultative Meeting of Experts on the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone hosted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan. As a result of those deliberations, the States of the region elaborated a draft of basic elements of the future treaty. We consider that as an important step, and my Government is committed to constructive work in this direction with other regional States and all interested countries.

As before, this year's draft resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia has been prepared by the States of our region. We sincerely hope that the General Assembly will be in a position to give its unanimous support to the proposed draft resolution at this session.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for their assistance in the process of disarmament and the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. We are also grateful for the assistance of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which has provided us with enormous support.

Another source of grave and urgent concern for my country is biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. The problem of the proliferation and use of such weapons has been directly addressed by the world community. We welcome the sustainable developments that are being made in these areas of disarmament. The Republic of Uzbekistan regards the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons as significant milestones in the disarmament process and will continue to support all the efforts of the international community aimed at the further development and strengthening of this process.

Uzbekistan reaffirms its strong commitment to the aim of the complete elimination of all anti-personnel landmines, as well as the prohibition of their use, production, stockpiling and transfer. We welcome the opening of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines for signature in Ottawa in December of 1997. We have been encouraged by efforts made by the international community to move towards a world free of those inhumane weapons.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, we are standing at the threshold of a new millennium which belongs to our children. We must convey to them a world that is entirely secure, a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. In order to achieve this noble purpose, however, the international community must act unanimously in all its efforts. For our part, I would like to assure the Committee that the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and its people will spare no efforts to contribute to this important process.

Mr. Belinga Eboutou (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. Chairman, in speaking for the first time in the First Committee, I have the pleasure of congratulating you on your illustrious election.

The creation of our Organization in the aftermath of the Second World War stemmed from the will of the peoples of the United Nations to fulfil a dream and to realize a profound and timeless aspiration, namely, to banish war and to see peace and security reign among nations. The end of the cold war revived this dream and this aspiration, and many of us hoped that the threats and agony of war might finally give way to the establishment of peace and the promotion of development.

Those hopes have not been totally disappointed, inasmuch as our efforts have led to the signature of several international instruments, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, of which Cameroon was one of the first signatories, the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and other similar regional treaties. In addition, we welcome the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has been able to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to develop forms of protection for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and an Ad Hoc Committee to carry out studies leading to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty, one that is effectively and internationally verifiable, banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

These are considerable achievements, but we must recognize that they are far from fully meeting our expectations with regard to general and complete disarmament. The respect for and application of these various instruments have not always been in keeping with the spirit that prevailed at their conception and adoption. Indeed, we have real cause for concern. Numerous conflicts are breaking out or ongoing in various parts of the world, thereby intensifying the arms race. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia have exacerbated tensions in that region and have reminded us that we cannot take non-proliferation as a given. And how can we fail to be concerned in the face of the manufacture by certain countries of long-range ballistic missiles or the refusal by others to implement the total ban on nuclear tests and on the production of fissile material for military purposes, not to mention the violations we are witnessing with respect to the START negotiations. The nuclear threat is still a reality, posing frightful dangers to all peoples and threatening the survival of mankind as a whole. We must therefore eradicate it together, through commitments and actions by the whole of the international community.

With that hope, Cameroon feels that we must redouble our efforts to bring all countries to ratify international disarmament conventions and to promote the conclusion of relevant new conventions, especially with regard to fissile material, and to mobilize the world's civilian populations more than before on behalf of general and complete disarmament. In the same vein, Cameroon is strongly in favour of the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as was recently proposed by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement at Durban.

I mentioned the nuclear threat weighing upon the world. However, like others, I should also like to mention the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms, which foster insecurity in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa. The Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) and the debate it inspired both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly are illuminating in this respect. At that time, Cameroon referred to the situation in the Central African subregion, where, owing to various internal and external conflicts, the situation today is unstable. War and the illicit flow of arms that stems from it, are conducive to insecurity and organized crime. To combat this phenomenon, it is therefore urgent to curb, if not eradicate, the circulation of and illicit trade in small arms in the subregion. As a member of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, Cameroon intends to work actively along those lines, together with the other States concerned. The scope of the phenomenon, its serious consequences and its ramifications, which go beyond the subregion and Africa as a whole, demand the mobilization of considerable resources, and we appreciate the contribution the United Nations is already making to the

Standing Advisory Committee and hope for even greater support from the international community. That support is increasingly vital, since the phenomenon has been little studied in the Central African subregion and, as a result, is becoming difficult to control, given the lack of reliable data.

In our permanent quest for general and complete disarmament, we need to concern ourselves not only with the supply of weapons but also with the demand for them. In this connection, it is essential that as many Member States as possible adhere to the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which will enter into force in December 1998, and to the Ottawa Convention.

Consideration of the question of disarmament cannot be limited to references to the impact weapons have on international peace and security. Humankind had hoped that the end of the cold war would lead to a speedier process of disarmament that would favour the mobilization of additional resources earmarked for development. Those hopes are far from being fulfilled. The persistence and proliferation of hotbeds of tension and areas of conflict continue to absorb vast resources, to the detriment of the fight against poverty. As the Secretary-General noted here in the Committee, the arms race diverts resources and capabilities to the detriment of development and does not contribute to peace.

That being said, the imposing issue of disarmament must remain the focal point of concern for the international community. It is a difficult goal, but Cameroon is of the view that its attainment is not impossible. We must do all we can to make it a reality. It is a vital and necessary condition for preserving the peace and security that peoples need to live, to thrive and to develop. Let us take action now to achieve general and complete disarmament. It is in the interest of all of us and of future generations. It is a difficult task, yes, but, as has been said before, we must be pessimistic in our analyses but optimistic in our actions.

The Chairman: I now call upon Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Hoffmann (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I thank members for once again giving me an opportunity to address the First Committee on the progress being made by the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Just over two years ago, the CTBT was adopted by an overwhelming majority of States. The CTBT's opening for signature on 24 September 1996 was a major milestone in the uphill struggle to ban all nuclear explosions and in arms control in general. Indeed, on signing the CTBT on its first day of existence, many States expressed their conviction that the Treaty would contribute to ending the nuclear-arms race and to the process of eliminating nuclear weapons.

This year, however, has seen some unexpected developments, which are a sharp reminder that there can never be room for complacency in our efforts to stop nuclear explosions. Following the tests announced by India and then Pakistan, both the Chairman of the Preparatory Commission and I issued statements echoing the deep concern expressed here by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, appealing to all parties concerned in the region for restraint and urging both countries to join the CTBT without delay and unconditionally.

At the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission in August, States signatories expressed deep concern and regret at the decision by India and Pakistan to carry out the tests, noting that they were contrary to the goal of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Concern was also expressed that the tests would contribute to a nuclear-arms race in South Asia. Delegations called upon India and Pakistan to sign and subsequently ratify the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

This appeal was taken up at the twenty-ninth South Pacific Forum, held in the Federated States of Micronesia in August, at which the heads of State or Government of 11 countries and the representatives of five others took part. The Forum reaffirmed its strong opposition to nuclear testing and condemned the tests by India and Pakistan. Grave concern was expressed at the challenge the tests constituted to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and at the risk of a nuclear-arms race in South Asia. The Forum urged its members and those countries that had not already done so to ratify the CTBT before the end of the three-year period after its opening for signature.

At the twelfth summit meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in South Africa last month, in which 113 member States took part, including 45 at the level of head of State or Government, the Durban

Declaration for the New Millennium was adopted. In that Declaration, the complexities arising from the nuclear tests in South Asia were noted, and the commitment by the parties concerned in the region to exercise restraint and to discontinue nuclear tests was considered positively. Later last month, at the forty-second regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), member States expressed grave concern and strongly deplored the nuclear tests conducted in South Asia in May. All States that had not yet done so were urged to become parties to the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

I mention these developments as a reminder of the threat posed by nuclear explosive testing and of our duty to respect the wishes of our 150 States signatories, which, by signing the CTBT, have formally undertaken a commitment to ban nuclear testing and expressed the wish to see a universal ban enter into force. It is for this reason that I am encouraged by the self-imposed moratoriums on further testing by India and Pakistan and the recent announcements by the Prime Ministers of both countries of the intention of their respective Governments to sign the CTBT.

The Treaty is becoming increasingly universal, with its 150 States signatories and 21 ratifications. That figure includes 10 of the 44 States listed in the Treaty whose ratification is necessary for it to enter into force and two nuclear-weapon States, France and the United Kingdom. Although the speed with which ratification instruments can be deposited depends on domestic national processes, I have been assured by many Member States that the ratification process is advancing smoothly in their countries. Nevertheless, we need to ensure that we have as many ratifications as possible by the third anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty.

In line with the continuing momentum towards signature and ratification, the Preparatory Commission is also working towards universality in its task of establishing the Treaty's global verification regime to monitor compliance with the test ban. Twelve countries -- Pakistan among them — that are not signatories to the CTBT have offered to host stations or have placed existing facilities at our disposal. The worldwide network of 321 monitoring facilities, supported by 16 radionuclide laboratories and spanning some 90 countries, which will be capable of detecting and identifying nuclear explosions, has to be operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. Currently, about 60 stations, on a voluntary basis, are transmitting data generated by four complementary technologies — seismic, radionuclide, infrasound and hydroacoustic — to our International Data Centre at Vienna. The Commission is now authorized by exchange of letters to initiate work at 82 stations in 30 countries. Thus, the groundwork has been laid for conducting surveys to assess the suitability of the locations chosen for new stations and to formulate the technical specifications for their construction and for the purchase of the equipment they need. However, for the installation, certification, operation and maintenance of monitoring stations, we want to conclude facility agreements with States signatories as soon as possible.

We envisage that a network of 170 primary and auxiliary seismic stations will receive the largest investment of capital over the next two years. So far, surveys at 11 sites have been concluded or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 12 primary and one auxiliary site has been initiated. Looking at the projected 80 radionuclide stations, 19 site surveys have been conducted or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 10 stations has been initiated. As for the 60 infrasound stations foreseen in the Treaty, 19 site surveys have been conducted or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 7 stations has been initiated. With regard to the 11 hydroacoustic stations, four site surveys have been concluded or are under way, and procurement of equipment for two stations has been initiated.

The International Data Centre, which will be processing the continuous flow of data generated by the four technologies from the monitoring stations for transmission to the States signatories, was inaugurated at Vienna in January. The first of four releases of application software from the prototype International Data Centre at Arlington, Virginia, was delivered and initially tested successfully in April. By 15 May, real-time data from the stations I mentioned were being received at our Centre using the newly installed high-speed communication link to the prototype Centre.

Although our Centre could not provide real-time processing and analysis during the nuclear tests announced by India because it was still installing the first release of application software, it retrieved data shortly afterwards from 28 primary seismic stations for 11 May for archiving and analysis. Despite the fact that it was in the middle of software trials during the tests announced by Pakistan, the Centre received data from 28 and 30 May from 29 and 23 primary seismic stations, respectively. The automatic processing of these data provided reasonable first estimates of the locations of the events, which were passed on to States signatories. Given the limited development of the current network of monitoring stations, the monitoring and analysis of these events in May were remarkably successful. Indeed, they should give us all a high degree of confidence in the ability of the evolving verification regime to detect the conduct of nuclear explosions in all environments and to monitor adherence to the CTBT. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to ensure the reliable detection, identification and location of such events and to provide a deterrent to clandestine nuclear testing.

This year has seen the signing of a contract with an international partner to establish the global communications infrastructure for the CTBT, which is the largest single item of investment in the verification regime. Over the next 10 years, a complex global network of very small-aperture terminals will be installed to ensure the swift and secure transport of data, even in the severest weather conditions, between the 337 facilities of the International Monitoring System, the International Data Centre and States signatories. By April of next year, 30 monitoring stations should be linked to the Centre by satellite dishes. The work involved in establishing this infrastructure is a major challenge for the communications industry because of its global coverage, spanning locations as far apart as Antarctica and Greenland and as remote as, for instance, Tristan da Cunha and the Galapagos Islands.

The Commission has also extended its outreach to States signatories and the host countries of stations, particularly the 52 that do not have permanent missions in Vienna. The talks that we have had with delegations in the duty stations and capitals concerned have broadened universal understanding of the relevance of our work in the context of each country's specific priorities, increased participation in the Preparatory Commission and accelerated the ratification process and the establishment of national authorities. The international cooperation workshop we are holding next month will be another opportunity to bring home to countries the benefits of joining the Treaty. We are equipping some 90 countries with the most up-to-date technology, paying for the operation of their stations and training staff.

As regards training, regional workshops on the International Monitoring System have been held this year in Japan and Kazakhstan. The first technical training programme for operators for monitoring stations will be starting next Monday in Vienna. Afterwards, the participants will undergo in-depth training at facilities in Argentina, Norway and the United States. The International Data Centre in Vienna will begin its first training programme next month, lasting six months.

Work has also begun on laying the foundations for on-site inspections provided for in the Treaty should the Executive Council consider that further clarification of an ambiguous event is necessary. An operational manual is being drawn up, as well as a list of basic equipment for testing and training purposes. A third workshop for inspections will be held next month, and the first introductory training course will be held this December.

As a newcomer sharing premises with other, older common-system organizations, the Commission is constantly aware of today's need to maintain cost-effectiveness and efficiency in achieving tomorrow's targets of universality. Currently, we have 155 staff members from 55 States signatories. There are 236 posts foreseen in the 1999 budget. As for participation in our work by States signatories, almost 400 experts from 43 countries are now using e-mail and fax facilities to take part in discussions on verification matters from their home countries. This innovation of the provisional Technical Secretariat has accelerated the speed with which issues can be formulated, aired and then transmitted to the Commission for its consideration. A second secure Web site is now being set up to enable documents on financial and administrative matters to be distributed electronically as soon as they have been finalized.

We are learning from the experience of other organizations based at the Vienna International Centre. A joint consultative group has examined the potential for synergies between our organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has already facilitated our work in many ways. Last year, the IAEA provided us with financial services until we took over this function ourselves. We have also adopted the structure of the IAEA budget and modelled our financial rules on those of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which in turn closely followed those of the IAEA. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization, too, helped us with procurement to get us started, but now that it has become clear that outsourcing is not always cost-effective, we are building up our own structures in order to take care of such core administrative tasks ourselves, with the backing of our States signatories.

Put simply, our goal is to keep our administrative expenses below the target numbers of the United Nations administrative reform and to carry out many tasks at a cost lower than that prevailing in other international organizations. Our efforts to achieve this goal have been acknowledged by our States signatories in their active participation in our meetings and in their willingness to sustain our work financially. Currently, the collection rate for the 1997 assessed contributions is over 96 per cent, and for 1998 contributions it is over 63 per cent, some 10 per cent higher than it was at this same time last year.

In November, the Commission will meet, hopefully to agree on a budget for 1999. We have two choices: either we can opt for a high budget that enables the verification system to be completed in a short time-frame or we can adopt a more modest investment plan providing for steady growth with a contingency plan for a significant increase if entry into force, as we all wish, should come sooner. In any event, we can be sure that we will have a good verification system for a good Treaty.

In concluding, I should like to reiterate my appeal to all States to participate in our endeavour and to continue to contribute to the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in its efforts to prepare for the entry into force of this important arms-control agreement.

The Chairman: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kim Sam Jong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply to respond to the remarks made by the South Korean representative at yesterday's meeting.

First, let me refer to the issue regarding the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The South Korean representative asserted that we should comply with the Safeguards Agreement regardless of the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. This assertion came from ignorance of the interrelation between the Agreed Framework and the Safeguards Agreement. In 1993, we declared our withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) because the Safeguards Agreement had been abused for putting political and military pressures on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Later, in 1994, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea/United States Agreed Framework was adopted, and we temporarily suspended the effectuation of our declared withdrawal from the NPT on condition that the Agreed Framework be implemented. Therefore, the issue of the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement can be resolved only when the Agreed Framework is implemented.

These two agreements are inseparably linked with each other. What is important with regard to the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States is the fact that it reflects the interests of both sides in a very careful way. Accordingly, it is unreasonable to ask out of unilateral interest for the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement without any regard to the implementation of the Agreed Framework. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea/United States Agreed Framework is broken, we have no choice but to effectuate our decision on withdrawal from the NPT. The South Korean representative is well advised to correctly understand the linkage of the two Agreements.

On the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it cannot be achieved unless nuclear threats against the North and the nuclear umbrella of the South are removed. This is so clear that I will avoid further elaboration on it.

Secondly, let me turn to the issue of political and military confrontation. The South Korean representative spoke as if his country were interested in removing political and military confrontation on the Korean peninsula and making efforts for its realization. This is like reversing black and white. South Korea is clamouring about North-South coexistence, but it fails to come up with a reunification proposal based on coexistence. If it truly wanted North-South coexistence, it should have responded positively to our proposal of confederal reunification, the main thrust of which is to reunify the country on the basis of North-South coexistence. Instead, it is attempting to put the question of reunification aside to be resolved in the distant future, with a view to concealing its true intention to achieve reunification based on its own system. Not only that, it is begging the United States and Japan for cooperation and collaboration in order to gain advantage in confrontation with the North. Its claim for North-South reconciliation and the "Sunshine Policy" is also for the same purpose.

Militarily as well, South Korea is begging for a security alliance with the United States and the permanent stationing of United States troops and is strongly opposed to the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, which is a prerequisite for the removal of military confrontation. In fact, the parties that now have armed forces on the Korean peninsula are the North and the South of Korea and the United States. Under these circumstances, if military confrontation is to be removed, security mechanisms should be established among the three parties.

At present, an agreement on non-aggression has already been adopted between the North and the South of Korea, and the United States and South Korea are maintaining a mutual-defence treaty. However, there is no security arrangement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. To fill this vacuum, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States should conclude a peace agreement.

All these facts show that the South Koreans are still trying to maintain intact their ultimate goal, which they set forth during the cold-war era. But if there is any change now, it is only a tactic. I therefore urge them to come forward with a true and sincere mind, to remove the political and military confrontation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. Chairman, my delegation will have an appropriate opportunity to convey its felicitations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee.

I have listened very carefully over the past few days to various statements regarding the nuclear tests in South Asia. My delegation appreciates the concern which has been voiced by many delegations, although we do not share their assessments fully. We will have an opportunity to explain our position once again in some detail in our general statement.

I have asked to speak because there have been some remarks and statements here which seem to assert that Pakistan has justified its tests on the basis of the fact that there was no progress in nuclear disarmament. This is not true. We have stated that we were compelled to test because our neighbour tested, and this was a security compulsion. Certainly those countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military alliance will fully understand these compulsions, because, as their communique states, nuclear weapons are meant to leave the aggressor in no doubt as to the consequences of an aggression. We face similar compulsions, and our tests were justified by those compulsions, not because there was lack of nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, I have heard some statements here which refer to the statement of my Prime Minister in the General Assembly. This morning, my colleague from New Zealand said, in effect, "We are not satisfied with words, we want deeds." I will not refer to the arrogance of this posture, but I would like to inform the Committee that the words spoken by my Prime Minister were the consequence of very high-level and important consultations held with important leaders. They were not spoken without regard and in vain. They spelt out clearly the conditions under which Pakistan would be able to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — first and foremost, the removal of coercion, progress towards the resolution of the underlying disputes and the absence of financial or political blackmail. So I would add that we will not respond well to verbal blackmail either.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly

Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

7th Meeting
Friday, 16 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier .... (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): At the outset allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. I am confident that under your able guidance this session will have a successful outcome. I should like to assure you and the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

The end of the cold war has brought mankind much hope for an extensive peace dividend. Indeed it has offered enormous opportunities for the greater advancement of the common quest of nations for peace and prosperity and their cooperation in shared objectives. Nations are able to focus more on the most immediate needs for the life and prosperity of their people — poverty alleviation, employment expansion, economic and social development, environment protection, childcare, and so on, and this has been reflected in the series of world summits that have been held during this decade.

In the field of disarmament welcome progress has also been made with, notably: the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which for the first time in history bans a whole category of weapons of mass destruction; the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the agreements on the principles and objectives and the strengthening of the review mechanism of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and the enhanced efforts towards the establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. However, the much-anticipated peace dividend has yet to arrive and has, in fact, to be vigorously fought for. The world is also presented with no less pressing challenges.

At the turn of a new millennium mankind is still living under the threat of nuclear weapons. The horror of the first-time use of nuclear bombs, even though that happened more than half a century ago, remains as fresh in the mind and as haunting today as then. The end of the cold war has rendered the doctrines of nuclear deterrence and the perceived justifications of the proponents of such doctrines even more obsolete. The world community had so hoped to initiate a process that would actually lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. However, such weapons still exist and their stockpiles remain unacceptably large and are being further upgraded.

Most of all there remains the regrettable lack of an express will and determination by the nuclear-weapon States to rid their security strategies of nuclear deterrence and actually to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This needs to be reversed to facilitate breakthroughs on the issues related to nuclear disarmament and to help in the work of such multilateral forums as the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament, or the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Under legally binding instruments, the nuclear-weapon States are obligated to conduct genuine nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The provisions of the NPT

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need to be fully implemented and in this context these States must, in particular, fulfil the obligations stipulated by article VI of the Treaty.

My delegation shares the view of many delegations - a view that was further underlined by the Secretary-General in his remarks at the opening of the Committee's general debate - that nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of the agenda of the United Nations and the world community as a whole.

The very existence of nuclear weapons has been denounced since their invention and they alone represent a threat to international peace and security and the survival of mankind. The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement have therefore made clear, especially in the circumstances of the world after the cold war their rejection of the arguments pursued by the nuclear-weapon States that such weapons provide unique security benefits. Here may I quote the profound assessments made by Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala, in his 12 October 1998 statement before a conference in Brussels:

> "The architects of global security for the coming millennium can no longer credibly argue that the world has only one choice, between nuclear apartheid and nuclear anarchy. There is indeed a choice to be made, but it is between nuclear-weaponized war and a nuclear-weapon-free world. The only sustainable choice is nuclear disarmament."

My delegation fully shares those assessments. The world and its inhabitants will be more secure in the absence of nuclear weapons. That was the hard experience learned from the cold war. The end of the cold war demands as well as creates conditions facilitating a process towards genuine nuclear disarmament. The complexity of armaments in today's war situation further underlines the need and urgency to step up efforts and work even harder to achieve disarmament objectives, especially the elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation welcomes the various initiatives aimed at accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament and working towards a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework remains valid. We are convinced that it is time to start a course of negotiations to arrive at a convention to ban nuclear weapons altogether, as the world has done with regard to chemical weapons.

In this regard, the Non-Aligned Summit held recently in Durban called for the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament, as the highest priority, of an ad hoc committee, and called for the holding of an international conference aimed at achieving agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame. It is welcome that this year the Conference on Disarmament agreed to establish the ad hoc committees to conduct negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and on assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Viet Nam welcomes and supports the efforts of countries in different regions of the world working towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We share the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned contributes positively to the enhancement of international peace and security. We commend such efforts and progress, notably the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. We support the approach of building a southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons, using the achievements of the existing zones as the basis from which to start. The Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone has entered into force, and we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to sign the protocol of the Treaty early so as to enable it to be fully effective.

Viet Nam shares the grave concern about the consequences of the indiscriminate use of landmines. We fully recognize the gravity of the problem and the tragedy in terms of both human and material losses of such indiscriminate uses. Thus we support a strict prohibition on indiscriminate use of these types of weapons and a moratorium on their export. Viet Nam holds that mine-clearance, assistance in demining and humanitarian assistance are very important to the mine-affected countries and peoples, and calls for greater efforts in this regard. Those are the common aims that we share. The issue here is that the indiscriminate use of mines must be strictly prohibited while recognizing the right of States to resort to the help of such weapons of a defensive nature for the defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. Cognizant of this fundamental distinction, we will be able together to further promote our long-cherished humanitarian care and concern.

It is the consistent position of Viet Nam to support all efforts aimed at building a world of peace, justice and prosperity, free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Along this line Viet Nam has become a party to many disarmament treaties, including the Biological Weapons Convention, the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and so on. We have signed the CTBT and the CWC. Today I wish to inform the Committee that, having accomplished the procedures to ratify the CWC, Viet Nam deposited its instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 30 September 1998 and became the one hundred eighteenth State party to this important Convention.

As we, the community of nations, enter a new millennium, we need to solidify our determination and accelerate our efforts to build a world of lasting peace and security and of development and prosperity for all. My delegation believes that this lasting peace and security must be constructed on an equal premise for all, and that only in conditions of peace and security can development and prosperity be consolidated and promoted. It will remain therefore in our view a matter of the highest priority to free this planet from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and to devise mechanisms to ban them totally and resolutely.

In this context my delegation believes that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should be convened to chart a new course of action in the field of disarmament building upon the achievements recorded at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the twentieth anniversary of which we are commemorating this year, and those achievements recorded thereafter. We are convinced that this session of the First Committee will contribute towards that end.

The Chairman: I call on Ambassador Soutar of the United Kingdom, who will speak in his capacity as the President of the Conference on Disarmament on the report of that Conference.

Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom): I wish to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election to the high office of Chairman of this Committee and wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. It is indeed a pleasure to see a fellow diplomat from the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva guiding our deliberations on security and disarmament issues, and I pledge my full cooperation and support in your endeavours. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau who assist you in your tasks.

As you have noted, Sir, I am speaking in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament to present to the First Committee the report of the Conference on its work during the 1998 session. This report is contained in document A/53/27, which is before members.

As members of the Committee are aware, after the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 the Conference on Disarmament underwent a period of pause and reflection. It had to take stock, to review the priorities before it, and had to undertake a consensus-building process on the next steps. These efforts have been pursued intensively and have now resulted in the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons, as well as an ad hoc committee under item 1 of the agenda entitled "Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament" to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The fact that the Conference was able to establish two negotiating mechanisms on important nuclear issues is a sign of its vitality and its ability to meet new challenges of a world in constant political flux.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons held substantive exchanges of views on all aspects of the issue, during which the importance attached to this item was confirmed, together with a widely shared readiness to engage in a search for a mutually acceptable solution to this question. The ad hoc committee established under agenda item 1 to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices devoted the little time available to it to a general exchange of views on relevant aspects of the treaty as a first step in the substantive negotiations which will start next year.

Furthermore, during the session successive Presidents, with the assistance of the outgoing and incoming Presidents, conducted intensive consultations and sought the views of the members of the Conference on an appropriate mechanism to deal with the issue of nuclear disarmament, making full use of all the proposals and views put forward by delegations. These consultations confirmed the importance attached to finding a mutually acceptable basis for dealing with this issue. Although it was not possible to reach agreement on the establishment of any further mechanism to address nuclear disarmament before the end of the session, the Conference nevertheless agreed that the consultation process of the presidency on this important issue should resume at the start of the 1999 session.

The other substantive issues on the agenda, namely, anti-personnel landmines, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and transparency in armaments, were also the subject of intensive consultations undertaken by Special Coordinators appointed for these purposes. Although consensus was not achieved on the establishment of subsidiary bodies under these items, it was generally felt that further efforts should be pursued during the next session, taking into account the progress achieved in those consultations, and that the emerging convergence of views on the issues should be consolidated and built upon.

The Conference also continued the consideration of the expansion of its membership, the review of its agenda and its improved and effective functioning. Considerable attention was paid to the further expansion of membership of the Conference. As a result of his intensive consultations, the Special Coordinator was able to propose a formula for a possible consensus on this issue, which will require further examination at the beginning of the next session.

As may be seen from its report and its official records, the Conference on Disarmament benefited from its self-imposed period of pause and reflection. The Conference has now entered a new stage where it has gradually started to overcome the obstacles it faced and to consolidate the process of building consensus on its priority tasks, thus enabling it to play its role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum of the international community.

In this respect, in full cooperation with the incoming President of the Conference, Ambassador Robert Grey of the United States, I intend to fully use the inter-sessional period to conduct appropriate consultations with a view to laying the ground for a smooth and expeditious start to the next session. I am confident that the outcome of the deliberations of the First Committee will contribute to the attainment of our common objectives.

It only remains for me to express my deep gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and the small team of dedicated staff for their invaluable support and assistance to the Conference.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish):* Allow me on behalf of the Cuban delegation and on my own behalf, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee. We are convinced that during your term of office our work will produce the success we all hope for. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Fifty-two years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its first resolution designed to prevent the occurrence of a nuclear war that would wipe the human race off the face of the earth. The resolution was adopted at a time when memories of the horrendous experience of the nuclear bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still fresh in everyone's minds. The threat of a recurrence remains and has been multiplied a thousand times by the dizzying development of science and technology in this second half of the century, which has made possible a continuous modernization of nuclear weapons.

Let us speak frankly. Initiatives to eliminate and eradicate this threat once and for all have not been lacking. Two concrete examples are the 28-nation proposal to the Conference on Disarmament for a programme of action to eliminate nuclear weapons, and the ongoing initiatives of the Group of 21 in that same forum to create an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament that would have priority status. Neither of these proposals has succeeded because of the manifest lack of interest on the part of the nuclear Powers. From Cuba's perspective, nuclear disarmament remains the highest-priority topic in the realm of disarmament, and Cuba will continue to focus its main efforts in that direction.

The prohibition of nuclear testing was never an end in itself but was meant to be a step towards ending the qualitative development of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, today different approaches are being imposed. A number of Powers for which nuclear explosions are simply no longer necessary persist in refusing to modernize their nuclear arsenals through sophisticated subcritical tests and supercomputers.

Recently the members of the Conference on Disarmament agreed to create two ad hoc committees, one to initiate negotiations on negative security assurances and the other on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. In Cuba's opinion, negative security assurances must be clearly reflected in a legally binding international instrument that is multilateral and non-discriminatory and will provide security for all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use of this type of weaponry. As regards negotiations on fissile materials, we are convinced that if we genuinely wish to take a genuine and effective step in the direction of nuclear disarmament, the agreement to be reached must take into consideration future production as well as handling existing stocks of fissile material.

It is a source of great satisfaction to my country to be a party to the multilateral treaties that seek to bring about the elimination of two types of weapons of mass destruction. I refer to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, respectively. Cuba has presented many initiatives in the context of the Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts negotiating a verification mechanism related to the Biological Weapons Convention and is determined to continue to contribute to the progress of this Group's work. While reaffirming our preparedness to participate actively in initiatives designed to provide a political impulse to the negotiating process, we emphasize the need to avoid setting artificial deadlines for its conclusion.

As regards the Chemical Weapons Convention, the highest priority should be attached to bringing about the full implementation of all its provisions. In ratifying the Convention, the Government of Cuba declared that in keeping with the provisions of article 11 of the Convention, concerning economic and technological development, the commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States on Cuba is entirely incompatible with the letter and spirit of this instrument. To this effect I wish to repeat that while this situation exists, and bearing in mind the provisions of the Convention, Cuba reserves the right to raise this case before the relevant bodies of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

It goes without saying that the lack of adequate control by States over their stockpiles and transfers of small arms and light weapons is causing a great deal of harm. Strengthening control should be a prime element of a strategy designed to combat the growing illicit traffic in arms. Cuba will continue to support unreservedly all multilateral efforts to respond effectively to the problems that arise in connection with small arms and light weapons. Cuba will object to any effort to manipulate the emergency nature of this effort in order to distort priorities in matters of disarmament adopted by the General Assembly in 1978.

As has been stated and restated in many multilateral forums, Cuba fully shares the humanitarian concerns provoked by the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines. However, we cannot gloss over the national security implications of this topic and the need to bear them in mind whenever a balanced and realistic approach is sought.

For Cuba, a country that for almost four decades has been the victim of a policy of aggression and hostility from the country with the greatest political, economic and military might in the world, to renounce the use of this type of arms to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity is a luxury that we can ill afford. Our country uses landmines in the perimeter area bordering the Cuban territory illegally occupied by the United States for its naval base in Guantanamo, in the eastern province of Cuba. We try to avoid violations and provocations and to prevent military incursions from this external enclave. Those mines are duly registered and marked in keeping with the requirements set out in amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that for three consecutive years the Committee has adopted a resolution presented by the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement on the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control. We hope that the text to be presented this year will once again receive the full support of all delegations.

Mr. Li Hyong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. My delegation is confident that under your skilful guidance the work of the Committee will come to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of our full cooperation.

It is internationally recognized that nuclear disarmament is a top priority issue in global disarmament. Although the international community has been working hard towards eliminating nuclear weapons, no real progress has been made. We believe that the main problem is that nuclear-weapon States still pursue a cold-war theory of nuclear deterrence based on their nuclear monopoly. The weakness of the existing nuclear non-proliferation system, clearly revealed in the process of disarmament debates so far, is caused by this nuclear deterrence theory.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, situated in a unique region geographically and politically, finds disarmament, nuclear disarmament in particular, to be an issue of critical importance. Basically, all the problems we are faced with in Korea, including peace and security and reunification, are related to disarmament. In this context we have been making every sincere effort for global disarmament and easing of tension and peace and security in the region.

My delegation is of the view that the objective of nuclear disarmament should be the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. To this end, first, a legally binding international agreement on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons should be concluded as early as possible. Nuclear-weapon States should not insist on their assertion that the discussion on the elimination of nuclear weapons be left to the nuclear-weapon States. They should respond positively to appeals by the non-nuclear-weapon States, including member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, to start multilateral negotiations on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this connection my delegation maintains that the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament should be convened at the earliest possible date with a view to discussing intensively overall nuclear disarmament matters, particularly a timetable for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be encouraged. The establishment of such zones represents an important way to achieve a nuclear-free world. The nuclear-weapon-free zones can never be secured by unilateral obligations on the part of non-nuclear-weapon States alone. That is possible only when the nuclear-weapon States assume their due obligations as well. The nuclear-weapon States should recognize the status of nuclear-weapon-free zones and provide unconditional and legally binding assurances not to use nuclear weapons against the nuclear-weapon-free zones and States in the region.

At the same time, the nuclear umbrella given selectively to certain regions and States should be removed. In order to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the United States should commit itself not to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and should withdraw its nuclear umbrella from south Korea. As in the past we will continue to work for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and will actively join international efforts to make a nuclear-free world through completely dismantling nuclear weapons.

The situation in North-East Asia remains tense because of the military manoeuvres to form a new military alliance. Last year the Japan-United States defence cooperation guideline was revised, selecting the Korean Peninsula as the main operational target, and again this year an open attempt was made to revise the United States-south Korea mutual defence treaty, combining it with the new Japan-United States defence cooperation guideline.

Japan, motivated by a militarist and expansionist ambition, is trying to realize its overseas expansionist plan by invoking the new Japan-United States defence cooperation guideline and taking part in a series of US-led military exercises such as the "Rim-Pac 98" joint military exercises. The south Korean authorities are introducing a large quantity of modern and sophisticated military equipment such as F-15 fighter planes and AC-130 military helicopters, while begging for security protection from the United States and the permanent stationing of United States troops.

This military alliance is being formed under the pretext of coping with the threat from the north. However, it is unreasonable and unjustifiable to assert that we alone pose a menace to the allied forces of the United States, Japan and south Korea. On the contrary, we are threatened. As a matter of fact it cannot be denied that they may initiate a pre-emptive attack against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at any time they deem necessary. Under such circumstances we are compelled to devote a great deal of resources to increasing our defence capability even when we are in a very difficult belt-tightening situation in order to overcome all kinds of hardship.

The reality of the Korean Peninsula clearly testifies that the escalation of the arms race and the delicate situation in which another war may break out at any moment are caused solely by the military build-up of the United States, Japan and south Korea, and not by the threat from the north at all. This situation calls for dismantling the outdated cold-war structure of confrontation at the earliest possible time, thus ensuring durable peace and security in North-East Asia and on the Korean Peninsula in particular.

What is most important in removing the cold-war structure of confrontation on the Korean Peninsula is to establish a new peace mechanism to replace the existing armistice system. To this end a peace agreement should be concluded between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, and United States forces must be pulled out of south Korea. There is no justification whatsoever for the United States to maintain its troops in south Korea since the cold war has ended, an agreement on non-aggression was concluded between the north and the south of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea/United States Agreed Framework was adopted, in which both parties have committed themselves to making joint efforts for peace and security. Moreover, the assertion that United States troops should remain in south Korea, even after the complete resumption of north-south relations and Korea's reunification, is in no way justifiable.

The issue of ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula should be solved in the context of reunification. Reunifying the divided country is the most urgent national task facing the Korean people, the solution of which brooks no further delay. Since the reality on the Korean Peninsula is that neither side is willing to give up its system, reunification based on one system will inevitably lead to confrontation.

Given the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the most appropriate and realistic way to reunification is to form a unified confederal State transcending differences in ideology and system in accordance with the three principles for national reunification — independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity. These three principles have been agreed upon between the north and south of Korea, are supported by the United Nations and constitute a fundamental cornerstone for reunification. We are convinced that the proposal to achieve reunification through confederacy based on one nation, one State, two systems and two Governments, is the most realistic reunification formula that conforms to the specific situation of the Korean Peninsula.

For the reunification of the country, relations between north and south should be improved. Relations between north and south in any case should be relations for national unity and reunification. To claim a "north-south reconciliation" and a "sunshine policy" without discarding the notion of confrontation is not even worthy of consideration, and there is no need for dialogue, contacts and visits aimed at perpetuating division and confrontation.

In order to bring about genuine peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, the countries concerned should pursue impartial policies towards Korea. If they pursue biased policies rather than balanced ones, that will obviously instigate competition and confrontation between north and south and lay obstacles in the way of realizing peace and stability.

All these facts show that with a view to ensuring lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, all relevant issues concerning a peace arrangement, north-south relations and reunification should be solved simultaneously, and among them reunification should be treated as a key issue. Accordingly, reunification through confederacy should be set as a common goal, and north and south should build relations of reconciliation and cooperation, moving towards confederation. The parties concerned should solve the issues of establishing a peace mechanism and ensuring regional security in conformity with confederal reunification, and the United States and other countries concerned should pursue impartial policies towards the Korean Peninsula, thus creating favourable conditions for realizing the confederation.

We believe that the time has come for the United Nations, which has intervened in the Korean question from the beginning, to have a correct understanding of the reality on the Korean Peninsula and to take an epochal measure to support confederal reunification so as to ensure durable peace and stability in this region as soon as possible.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the pleasure of saying how gratified the delegation of Venezuela is at your election, Sir, to the post of Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that your experience and able guidance will guarantee us concrete results in the promotion of the objectives defined by the Organization in the field of disarmament. You, Sir, may rely on Venezuela's constant support in carrying out these tasks. We extend our congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau.

At the same time I must pay tribute to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana for his very effective guidance of the activities of the Committee during the fifty-second session. Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala on his appointment to the post of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. Thanks to his wide-ranging experience he will make a decisive contribution to the achievement of the lofty objectives that underpin United Nations actions in the field of disarmament.

In an international environment that is as promising as it is paradoxical, the United Nations has carried out a first-rate mission in the promotion of agreements and measures for disarmament of universal scope. However, progress achieved over the past few years and the new international security system that still remains a work in progress contain some contradictory elements, the magnitude and complexity of which — particularly in problems related to international peace, development and security — require the collective participation of all States without exception.

The elimination of nuclear weapons remains and unshirkable duty and a common aspiration. Countries possessing nuclear weapons are chiefly responsible for achieving this objective. To this effect, Venezuela is convinced of the need for the Conference on Disarmament, the sole forum for negotiating agreements and measures in this field, to establish an ad hoc committee to initiate negotiations on a gradual programme of negotiations with specific goals for completely eliminating this category of weapons of mass destruction.

A particularly encouraging factor in the multilateral disarmament agenda has been the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee entrusted with negotiating an international non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is true that in the past few years important agreements on the reduction of nuclear weapons have been reached between the two countries with the greatest arsenals — I am thinking of START I and START II. However, despite our legitimate expectations concerning this process and the possibility of additional reductions, we note with concern that it has lost its momentum as a result of the non-ratification by one of the principal nuclear Powers of the START II Treaty. In this connection we urge both countries to intensify their efforts to achieve, within the stipulated deadline, the objectives defined in those instruments.

Efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation have been affected recently by the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan. This has revealed the underlying nuclear threat inherent in the present international scenario; hence the need to strengthen through dialogue and international cooperation the set of norms and principles that regulate relationships among States in this field. We welcome the declaration made by both countries last September in which they announced their intention to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We also note with concern that there has been a lack of progress at the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We are afraid that this might have a negative impact on the scope of the objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament established in article VI of that instrument, according to which nuclear-weapon States must act in good faith in adopting concrete disarmament measures. In the process of strengthening non-proliferation a positive fact has been Brazil's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a contribution of transcendent importance for the strengthening of international peace and security.

Keenly aware of the usefulness of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the promotion of international security, we reaffirm our support for the enhancement of political linkages among the areas established under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, and we support any initiatives towards the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones such as in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Turning to the threat presented by other categories of weapons of mass destruction, Venezuela welcomes the coming into force of the Paris Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the birth of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in which Venezuela, as a State party since 1997, has the honour of participating as a member of the executive board. We hope to make constructive contributions towards the consolidation of this instrument and towards its full implementation.

In light of progress achieved in strengthening the international regime against bacteriological weapons, our country reaffirms the need for the ad hoc group established in 1994 to conclude negotiations on a protocol defining machinery for effective verification.

Latin America and the Caribbean have made a decisive contribution to the creation of measures of disarmament and in many cases have pioneered the achievement of agreements to promote a climate of peace and stability within the region. The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, signed last year within the Organization of American States, provides a political response to the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms, particularly the proliferation of such traffic. This illicit traffic in small arms worsens domestic conflicts in many areas and links activities characteristic of uncivil society, such as terrorism, drug-trafficking, money laundering and organized crime, which today constitute serious threats to the stability and security of our countries. Venezuela supports the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, particularly the recommendation to convene an international conference on illicit traffic in small arms in all its aspects.

A measure of particular importance in the area of conventional disarmament, in view of its undeniable humanitarian dimension, is the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Venezuela, as a signatory to the Ottawa Convention, is embarking upon the necessary legislative procedures for ratification. We are gratified that with the deposit by Burkina Faso of the fortieth instrument of ratification, the Convention will come into force on 1 March 1999.

Trusting in the importance of multilateralism as a generator of agreements and measures for disarmament, we consider that convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is an important element in restating the objectives of general and complete disarmament promoted by the Organization. At the same time we feel that the convening of the session should be the result of the general will of Member States of the United Nations. The configuration of a cooperative, international security system requires a multidimensional approach in which the causes of conflict are considered from an integral perspective so as to include political, economic and social aspects, *inter alia*, in reaffirming the inescapable relationship between peace and the development of peoples.

The conclusions we reach at this session will be particularly relevant to handling matters relating to the international community.

Ms. Belker (Croatia): On behalf of the Croatian delegation I congratulate you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau on your election, and I pledge to you our own best efforts.

The general debate has entered its fifth day. I have listened carefully to a number of comprehensive statements with much valuable input. Croatia shares many of the assessments and thoughts already expressed by other representatives. In my statement, therefore, I shall concentrate on Croatia's most pressing concerns regarding developments in disarmament and international security since last fall.

But first I should like to register the fact that Croatia has continued to fulfil its obligations as regards international regulatory disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. Croatia has signed the strengthened safeguards Protocol, ratified the Ottawa Convention and initiated the procedure for ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In conventional weapons control, Croatia has carried out all the obligations deriving from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and article IV of the Dayton Accords related to weapons reduction and verification measures. We shall take an active role in the upcoming negotiations regarding article V of the Dayton Accords, thus confirming our strong support for the efforts of the international community in securing peace and stability both regionally and globally.

Secondly, while recognizing and welcoming the progress achieved in the last decade, Croatia cannot but share the concern that has already been voiced by many delegations here on the pace and tenor of developments in disarmament and international security since we last met. A comment related to another major international threat — the current global financial turmoil — seems pertinent to our debate. A prominent political analyst expressed his deep concern recently that the international community had failed to consolidate in the economic sphere the gains from the end of the cold war and that "we are now moving beyond the risk of missing opportunities to the risk of retrogression".

Indeed, 1998 has been a year of serious challenges in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. We have truly faced the risk of missing opportunities. Last fall we were able to point to a mixed year with significant achievements and some setbacks. We had the good fortune to welcome the adoption of the CTBT and strengthened safeguards measures, the beginning of the enhanced Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review process and the anticipated signing of the Ottawa agreement.

The ground that we have broken since then does not give us reason for great satisfaction. The South Asian nuclear crisis has caused great concern and has undermined the integrity and viability of the global non-proliferation regime. Missile proliferation and the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction continue to threaten regional and global security. Apart from the recent welcome agreement on plutonium management and disposition, the non-ratification of START II suggests a stand-still in the process of nuclear arms control. The strengthened NPT review process seems to have taken the opposite course. A decision to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a global ban on anti-personnel landmines is overdue, particularly as we have the achievements of the Ottawa process to build upon. Croatia has been one of the most afflicted countries in Europe in that respect, and we are painfully aware of the urgency of this problem.

There is, fortunately, a silver lining to this situation. Croatia welcomes the long-awaited decisions in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of ad hoc committees on a fissile material cut-off treaty and negative security assurances. However, Croatia regrets that the Conference was unable to agree on further enlargement. We had hoped to be admitted in the first group on the basis of objective and transparent criteria. Croatia remains hopeful that the membership of the Conference on Disarmament will become more nearly universal.

Croatia is delighted, as are so many countries, at next year's entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. The growing number of States that have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention is also a good development. Croatia welcomes the progress achieved in the work of the ad hoc group charged with drawing up a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention and is looking forward to its early conclusion. At the regional level we consider the recent adoption of a European code of conduct on arms sales to be an important contribution to greater accountability and transparency in conventional arms control in Europe.

Naturally, development in international security and disarmament cannot be viewed in isolation from wider political and security realities. We live in a period of intense economic and financial distress and political volatility. Lagging behind in the disarmament process increases the existing threats to international security and inhibits the evolution of regional and global strategic environments. To make one hostage to the other is to do a great disservice to peace and international security.

Thirdly, having said all that, I am pleased to note that there are constructive suggestions on the table on ways and means to untangle this dangerous knot. Several countries from across the geographic and political spectrum have come up with pragmatic proposals that should help to move the process forward. Their efforts to bridge fundamental differences in approaches to the complex set of deterrence, arms control and disarmament problems are encouraging. In this respect, Croatia appreciates the sustained efforts by mainstream countries within the international community — such as South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden, as well as other countries — to seek, in the words of the South African representative, "to identify the middle ground and to avoid the trap of inaction". We also welcomed the eight-nation ministerial declaration on the need for a new agenda for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Croatia is committed to working with mainstream and other countries to advance our common goals.

We consider the proposed approaches realistic and grounded in our common interests and eventual shared benefits. We trust they will be given careful consideration and used as a basis upon which to build. To do that, a sense of historical perspective, realism and collective responsibility is required as well as a greater recognition of the need for political accommodation and compromise.

In order to achieve our goals we all have to be willing to back our words and commitments with deeds. This is the work that all of us must do together. All States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, have their part to play in improving the present state of security and disarmament negotiations.

Fourthly, and finally, the world is at a particularly fragile stage. It is beyond the ability of any single country and the capacity of any single institution to keep the situation from deteriorating. It is not difficult to anticipate the ramifications of further procrastination in the disarmament debate. This year's developments should inject a sense of urgency into our deliberations. Different priorities, conflicting interests and regional security concerns need to be addressed politically, with more vigour and determination. But they also need to be measured against the vital interests of global peace and security so that a collaborative and productive approach to international security and disarmament can gain weight in international forums, starting with the First Committee.

The end of the cold war has provided a historical window of opportunity for all of us to try to move ahead in disarmament and international security. Can we honestly say that that window of opportunity has been used effectively? That is not a rhetorical question. I reflect upon it with the sense of missed opportunity that I mentioned earlier. At this session the First Committee must try to ensure that we do not continue beyond that point. We must summon our political will and focus our energies on carrying out our commitments and obligations. We have been bound to do so, politically and legally. The First Committee ought to give guidance on the necessary steps in the direction of sustainable disarmament in our own self-interest and in the interest of sustainable development, peace and security, as stressed by the Secretary-General at the beginning of the session.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) *(interpretation from French):* My delegation first wishes to express to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We also congratulate the members of the Bureau. We are convinced that under your guidance the Committee will make substantial progress on the important issues that lie on its agenda.

I also wish to thank Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, former Chairman of the First Committee, for the remarkable work carried out during course of the fifty-second session.

Disarmament is one issue on which considerable progress has been recorded in recent years but which, because of its complex nature, requires in its approach ever greater vigilance and determination. In fact, numerous and important initiatives are regularly undertaken throughout the world with the goal of reducing the potential of weapons of mass destruction and other categories of weapons.

The most important event that took place at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly was the announcement of the entry into force next March of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The interest of many countries, and not the smallest, in this Convention records the will of the international community to rapidly achieve a world free of anti-personnel landmines. While Burkina Faso does not have this kind of weapon, it nevertheless joined early in the process of negotiations leading to the elaboration of the Convention, having regard for the devastating effects of anti-personnel landmines throughout the world, especially in Africa. It was the fortieth State to ratify the Convention, thus allowing for its entry into force.

At the same time, we are pursuing together with civil society, our efforts to make people aware, being convinced that awareness is a vital ally in efforts towards disarmament. In this total commitment by my country to rid our planet of anti-personnel landmines we can only welcome the offer from the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of States parties in Maputo in May 1999, with the firm hope that this meeting will further strengthen our determination to put into concrete form the application of this multilateral Convention.

One of the first actions will naturally be to gather the necessary resources for the needs of demining and for assistance to victims. In this respect we welcome the support and pledging of contributions from certain countries in the context of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Among the progress made in recent years in disarmament we can cite the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). Here we should also add the creation and strengthening of nuclear-weapon-free zones, specifically those established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. The creation of these zones on the basis of freely contracted agreements by the States concerned, contributes to the strengthening of international peace and security. That is why the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States should be broadly encouraged and supported by the international community.

While welcoming this progress we remain aware that a great deal still remains to be done. With the end of the cold war nothing should justify the maintenance today of nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction, still less research and testing in the area of strategic weapons. In this respect my delegation hopes that the commitments made by India and Pakistan in the General Assembly will lead very rapidly to their accession to the various treaties and conventions. But if we want truly to guarantee peace and collective security, then general and complete disarmament is what our world requires.

Next in order we should also be concerned with the phenomenon of so-called small arms and light weapons, the uncontrolled export and circulation of which we know has grave consequences. During the first international meeting on controlling the flow of small arms, held in Oslo, Burkina Faso reaffirmed its support for the moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of these kinds of weapons and for the follow-up mechanism, the programme for coordination and assistance for security and development.

My country's determination to fight the proliferation of light weapons stems from its decision to seek peaceful settlements to crises and conflicts. In this spirit it hosted a meeting of ministers responsible for security in West African countries in June 1998 in Ouagadougou, under the auspices of Interpol. In that same spirit also, in November

1996, it actively contributed to the success of the Bamako conference on disarmament, conflict prevention and development in West Africa, during the course of which the idea arose for a moratorium on light weapons.

In this spirit too Burkina Faso participated in the meetings of the Agreement on Non-Aggression and Defence — ANAD — in March 1997 and May 1998. These meetings, as we know, recommended that member States not only ratify the moratorium but also expand the number of member States of the Economic Community of West African States. My country was also pleased to sponsor the resolution adopted at the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly which endorses the Bamako conclusions. My delegation will again this year support any initiative along these lines.

From one conference to another we have noted that the international dimension of the scourge of small arms is becoming clearer. In order to contain and control this phenomenon, with its harmful effects on the stability of States and on peace and international security, we need to mobilize the international community. Therefore, to take account of this serious concern, the thirty-fourth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held from 1 to 10 June 1998 in Ouagadougou, adopted a relevant resolution on this issue. In doing so, the African leaders made the following observations: the proliferation of small arms constitutes a threat to the peace, security and stability of African States, whose state structures are still fragile; the accumulation and illegal holding of these weapons exacerbate violence and criminality, hampering development and jeopardizing the democratic process; and the proliferation of small arms is closely linked to other criminal activities which must also be treated within the context of the other initiatives aimed at reducing such activities.

In the immediate future, in addition to the moratorium, the OAU secretariat is responsible for gathering from member States full information on the breadth of the scourge and the measures already undertaken. To assist in this mission it is urgent that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, installed in Lomé, be reactivated and rendered operational by giving it the necessary means.

Thus we see that the member States of the OAU are making a priority of the fight against the production, dissemination and use of small arms. But obviously this is a gigantic endeavour and they expect the international community to support their efforts, because basically it is one single fight, that of building a world where peace, security and stability prevail.

Mr. Nayeck (Mauritius): At the outset let me join the previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are fully confident that with your vast experience and able leadership you will steer the work of the Committee towards a fruitful and meaningful conclusion.

Disarmament should remain one of the world's priorities. It is inconceivable that some countries spend so much on their military budgets while the vast majority of the world's population is living in abject poverty and daily grapples for survival. Essential basic commodities are out of reach; clean water is a dream. The costs associated with one or two fighter planes can change the economies of many small developing States. Resources spent on armaments should be directed to sustainable development.

We welcome the emphasis placed on disarmament by the Secretary-General and the re-establishment of the Department of Disarmament Affairs headed by the distinguished Under-Secretary-General

I wish to inform the Committee of a fact that is perhaps not very well known to the international community. Mauritius does not have an army and is proud to be among the very few countries to have achieved this goal. We do not spend money on armaments. As Mauritius does not have an army, we are consequently pleased to submit a nil report yearly to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and would encourage other countries to do likewise. However, we wish that the scope of the Register had been expanded to include a broader category of weapons. Transparency in military expenditures and holdings is without doubt a confidence-building measure.

Mauritius is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and was one of the first countries to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the African nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty. We are a party to the Ottawa Convention and are confident that its early entry into force next year will encourage more countries to join the world ban on anti-personnel landmines. We note with satisfaction that the Government of Mozambique will host the first conference of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention in Maputo.

Unfortunately Africa is plagued by landmines. The international community should increase its assistance in the demining process. In this context we applaud Australia's "destroy a minefield" initiative. However, my delegation notes with dismay that new mines are being laid in Angola by the UNITA forces.

The destabilizing and devastating effects of illicit trafficking in small arms is a matter of grave concern. The Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization has stated:

> "It is estimated that 90 per cent of those killed or wounded by light military weapons are civilians and, most shockingly, that 80 per cent of those are women and children." *(A/53/1, para. 50)*

This crude fact is shocking. Though significant measures are being taken in different parts of the world to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms, the international community must act swiftly to curb and eradicate this dangerous scourge. This illicit traffic is one of the major factors identified by the Security Council that lie at the roots of conflict in Africa.

Earlier this year we were reminded of the dangers for humanity of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the attendant risk of a new arms race. No country can feel genuinely secure as long as the threat from nuclear weapons exists in any quarter. We also believe that any international instrument for the elimination of nuclear arsenals should be non-discriminatory in nature. Mauritius welcomes the resumption of constructive dialogue between India and Pakistan and commends the restraint shown by the two countries.

Mauritius has always believed that there is no justification for the maintenance of any arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. We are therefore convinced that there is an urgent need for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction and also a pressing need for the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Security for all will be achieved only when this threat is completely eliminated.

We welcome the positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament with the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. It is regrettable that once more the Conference on Disarmament has failed to establish the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We note with satisfaction, however, the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on a fissile material cut-off treaty. To be credible and fully universal any fissile material cut-off treaty must address the question of past and existing stockpiles of fissile material.

The Secretary-General rightly reminded us at our third meeting:

> "The fact that it is the First Committee of the General Assembly reflects the priority given to disarmament by the United Nations in its earliest days."

That emphasis was right and should continue to guide us in our deliberations during the work of this session.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, let us redouble our efforts and work closely to rid ourselves of all weapons of mass destruction so that we may live in a more peaceful world.

Mr. Amehou (Benin) *(interpretation from French)*: My delegation wishes, just as those who spoke before me, very warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your brilliant election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. This choice did not come about by chance. It was the logical consequence of all the efforts which you yourself and your country have exerted and continue to invest in international peace and security. In knowing thus your exceptional qualities, my delegation feels very reassured that under your chairmanship the results of our present deliberations will be encouraging.

My congratulations are also addressed to the Secretary-General, who spares no effort where questions of peace and international security are concerned and who kindly addressed the Committee at the commencement of its work.

The current agenda of work is both interesting and varied and includes complex issues. My delegation will take them up with you, Sir, and all other delegations with an open and constructive mind.

Benin, a peace- and justice-loving country, is undertaking through its institutions, its lifestyle and its culture, to develop the culture of peace and to oppose violence. Benin supports a peaceful settlement of all conflicts. Thus my Government supports the revitalization of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, based in Lomé.

The international community has recorded much success in these past few years in disarmament. As evidence of this, suffice it to look at the list of various international conventions that have already entered into force or are about to enter into force. Thus my delegation welcomes the imminent entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is regrettable, however, that combatants in many wars continue to use these barbaric weapons which for several years after the end of hostilities still spread desolation and poverty among innocent civilians, especially women and children who are the main victims of these disaster-causing devices.

My delegation thus urgently appeals to all those countries still hesitating to sign and ratify this Convention to join the ranks of those who have chosen no longer to expose the children of our peace-loving populations to the dangers of mutilation.

In spite of the success I have mentioned, 1998 has brutally reminded us that unfortunately our world is still not free of the risk of nuclear annihilation. I wish here to mention the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan. Our Assembly should in this respect further reflect with a view to proposing new and innovative ideas and concepts which would finally bind mankind to the path of true general and complete disarmament.

Regarding chemical and biological weapons, it is still disconcerting to know that certain States continue to stockpile and secretly develop them. These States are thus posing a grave threat to world peace and security.

Disarmament efforts by the international community in recent years have not dwelt on small arms or light weapons and their unbridled proliferation which presents great danger to security, especially in Africa where this situation continues to threaten the peace and security of many countries. Indeed the proliferation of these weapons has caused the destabilization of many African regimes. It has introduced insecurity, banditry and violence in several regions, both rural and urban. The consequence of this state of affairs is the blocking of economic activity, thus eloquently illustrating the indissociable link between peace and sustainable development.

The Government of my country actively participates in work to establish within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) a moratorium on the importing, exporting and manufacture of small arms. These laudable efforts on the part of ECOWAS to establish a climate of peace and reciprocal confidence in the subregion should be supported by the international community through sustained assistance to demobilize and, in particular, to reintroduce the former combatants from Sierra Leone and Liberia into social life. This assistance should take into account, in the entire subregion, the collection and even repurchase from these former combatants of their small arms and ensure their effective destruction. It is only through such bold action that the international community will help the subregion of West Africa to reduce in the initial stage and in acceptable proportions the supply of weapons in circulation there. Thus we will be able to define together a reliable mechanism which will allow us to guarantee effective control of the flow of small arms from the producer to the consumer.

Our fading century has witnessed violence and human barbarity, of which thousands of our fellow human beings have been victims. It is our duty to use all our energies to save the next century from these wars, these tragedies. My country, Benin, remains convinced that only a culture of peace will be able to help us in this. Together let us spare the twenty-first century the disasters of war experienced in the twentieth century, through the efforts which each one of our delegations will have made.

Election of the Rapporteur

The Chairman: I should now like to revert to the organizational business of the election of a rapporteur. I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of African States that the candidate nominated by that Group is Mr. Motaz Zahran of Egypt.

If there is no objection I shall take it that in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Zahran Rapporteur of the Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I extend to Mr. Zahran my warm congratulations on his election. I am sure that he will make a great contribution to the work of the First Committee at this session.

Mr. Zahran (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I will not prolong the meeting. I only wish to express my deep gratitude to you, Sir, and to the various delegations in this Committee for my election as Rapporteur of the First Committee during the present session of the General Assembly. I wish also to extend my thanks to the Group of African States for nominating me to the post. I hope I will live up to their expectations while carrying out my functions.

Without doubt the different, intricate developments in the international arena during past years which reflect directly on the field of disarmament are matters that should be given the appropriate priority and will no doubt make this session unique and totally different from previous sessions, at least since I personally started to work in this sphere when I was associated with the United Nations disarmament fellowship programme in 1993.

In conclusion, I wish to affirm that I will exert every effort and endeavour, with the moderate experience I have in the field of disarmament and international security, so that combined with your efforts, Sir, and the efforts of the Vice-Chairmen and members of the Secretariat, this session will be a success and we will be able to reach the objectives to which we all aspire.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/53/PV.8

General Assembly

Fifty-third session

First Committee

8th Meeting
Friday, 16 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Mernier .... (Belgium)

In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Diatta (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of the Niger is pleased to see Mr. Mernier presiding over the work of the First Committee. We wish to take this opportunity to extend our warmest congratulations to him. I assure him of my delegation's wholehearted readiness to support him in his duties. We also extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

While all mankind may aspire to genuine peace, it remains true nonetheless that the tragic events that occur throughout our planet continually demonstrate the need for general and complete disarmament in the areas of nuclear and conventional weapons alike.

The Niger, in accordance with its noble ideals of international peace and security as set down in the United Nations Charter, has set as its primary objective, within the context of its foreign policy, the establishment of relations of good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence with all neighbouring countries, as well as all peace- and justice-loving States throughout the world. Similarly, my country has always striven for genuine disarmament, an indispensable factor of the achievement of the international peace and security to which we all aspire.

In this respect, I am pleased to note that my country adheres to several international instruments, among which I would mention the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Thus, the Niger solemnly appeals to those countries that have not yet done so to adhere to these important instruments in order to give them the requisite universality.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the Niger was pleased by the conclusion in Ottawa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which my country signed on 4 December 1997 and is in the well-advanced process of ratifying.

How can we maintain international peace and security if we are not vigilant to the proliferation of weapons of all types, in particular those that are used most in armed conflicts throughout the world? The accumulation and transfer of light weapons and small arms perpetuate many conflicts, with serious repercussions for international peace and security. This situation affects us all and forcefully requires us to take vigorous action to implement the measures that already exist in this area.

That is why Niger the, at a very early stage, joined with the United Nations and some neighbouring countries to take global action against the scourge of illicit arms trafficking. That is also why my country has regularly contributed to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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In the domestic sphere, in addition to its legislation on the import and possession of firearms, the Niger established in 1994 a national Commission to collect and control illicit weapons. The Commission, whose purpose is to curb the lack of security caused by the circulation and proliferation of small arms in the Niger, has already achieved convincing results, as observed in March 1995 by the United Nations Advisory Mission on curbing illicit circulation of small arms in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion. For example, 3,411 weapons were collected in 1994 and 168 in 1995, all of which have been stored pending their destruction in the near future, an important event to which all the heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Niger will be invited, along with the representatives of international organizations and all other interested persons.

The Commission achieved these encouraging results thanks in part to agreements concluded with the armed rebel fronts, following mediation by friendly countries, in April 1995 and more recently in August 1998. In other words, the main locus of the use of these weapons has disappeared in the Niger. But the fact that the armed elements were demobilized, quartered and disarmed does not mean that everything is settled. Residual insecurity remains and disturbs the calm of peace-loving citizens. That is why further considerable efforts must be made regarding the scope of the phenomenon and the lack of resources for fighting this scourge. This justifies my country's request to the United Nations for financing to assist our national Commission to collect and control illicit weapons. Indeed, assistance from the United Nations and the international community at large is more necessary than ever to bring about lasting security in the Niger.

The regional dimension of conventional and nuclear disarmament is undoubtedly an essential element in establishing a climate of lasting peace throughout the world. Here, the Niger remains convinced that the activities of the United Nations regional centres for disarmament in Asia, Africa and Latin America must be strengthened. In that regard, my country is very pleased that the work of the Lomé centre, whose importance for Africa is beyond doubt, will continue. But the centre will be able play its full role only with adequate material and financial resources.

Along the same lines, I should recall that the promotion and increase of nuclear-weapon-free zones is conducive to the establishment of genuine disarmament, both regionally and internationally. Clearly, this is not easy to achieve, which is why the support of the entire international community is necessary.

The Niger joins in supporting the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, because additional progress is indispensable in the areas of the control of weapons of mass destruction and the establishment of effective norms for conventional weapons.

In conclusion, on behalf of the delegation of the Niger, I thank the Secretary-General for his courageous reform programme, which has included the transformation of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation is pleased, Madam, to see you in the Chair at this meeting. We warmly congratulate Ambassador Mernier of Belgium on his well deserved election to the chairmanship; the delegation of Ecuador pledges its firm cooperation in the work of the Committee. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. We wish also to thank Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe for the intelligent and dynamic manner in which he conducted the work of the Committee last session.

Ecuador's position on major issues of disarmament and international security is reflected in the final document of the Durban Summit of non-aligned countries. I wish nonetheless to speak of a number of matters that Ecuador views as particularly relevant.

Within the goal of general and complete disarmament, nuclear disarmament continues to have top priority for all countries, irrespective of their social, economic or political status. Here, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the focus of our efforts to achieve that goal, which is why my delegation once again appeals to those States that have not yet done so to accede to that instrument, which must be universal. We welcome the recent accession by Brazil, which strengthens Latin America's firm support of the NPT. We are also following with particular interest the work of the Preparatory Committee for the year-2000 Review Conference and are confident that the results of the conference will meet the hopes of the international community.

We also hail the signing of the Political Declaration at the Ushuaia summit, by which the members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the associated States of Chile and Bolivia have formed a zone of peace, free of weapons of mass destruction.

Consistent with its traditional policies, Ecuador has condemned the nuclear tests by India and by Pakistan, which unquestionably constitute a threat to international peace and security, not only in that region but throughout the world. We also think it necessary for those two countries as quickly as possible begin a positive dialogue with a view to creating a climate of confidence that will help ease the tension caused by these tests.

Ecuador was pleased at the possible creation within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, to consider negotiations on a programme leading gradually to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a defined time-frame through a universal, binding multilateral instrument to that end.

We view the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as particularly important, and we are pleased to see the number of signatories growing — to 149 as of 20 June 1998, 14 of which have ratified the Treaty. We urgently appeal to the 44 States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to enter into force to act quickly to shoulder the special responsibility they have assumed.

As we did at the fifty-second session, we stress the importance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which remains valid. We believe that all States, in conformity with the Court's Opinion, must pursue multilateral negotiations on a convention on nuclear weapons prohibiting the development, manufacture, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate elimination.

Ecuador considers it essential for nuclear-weapon States to provide sufficient, unconditional and legally binding guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States on the use or threat of use of these weapons. Here, the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to create an ad hoc committee on negative security guarantees is of particular importance.

We believe also that greater support should be accorded the negotiations on a treaty banning fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear devices. We welcome the creation of a special committee in the Disarmament Commission to prepare the ground for the treaty, whose goal must be nuclear disarmament, not just non-proliferation.

Ecuador, as a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, believes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region represents a positive step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament. In this context, it is crucial that nuclear-weapon States give unconditional guarantees regarding the use or threat of the use of such weapons to all States in the nuclear-weapon-free zone in question.

We welcome the joint declaration of 9 June 1998 by the Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden regarding a new agenda on nuclear disarmament whose ultimate objective would be to create a world free from these weapons and which would not be limited to the question of non-proliferation. We believe that compliance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will ultimately lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We find it positive that the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997, has acquired a universal character and thereby moved closer to the complete and effective implementation of all its provisions, and we appeal to those States that have not yet done so to ratify it. Priority must also be given to the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. We look forward to a speedy conclusion to the ongoing negotiations in the Ad Hoc group on a legally binding protocol to establish a verification regime.

Many States, especially developing countries, are concerned about the illicit transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. Disarmament measures and the end of certain armed conflicts have, in certain parts of the world, resulted in the stockpiling and proliferation of these weapons, which are then distributed to other countries that are experiencing armed conflicts or instability. Terrorists and drug traffickers are the biggest consumers of those devices. About 100 million weapons of this kind are in uncontrolled circulation, representing an even greater threat, perhaps, than the manufacturing of new weapons. This is one of the most lucrative aspects of the death business.

To put an end to the problems relating to the illicit transfer and circulation of unlawful weapons, it is important that Governments assume greater responsibility regarding the export or import, use, stockpiling and in particular the distribution of these weapons. It must be recognized that some Governments are adopting national measures that may improve the situation in certain conflict regions. In this respect, we welcome the adoption in 1996 by the Disarmament Commission of guidelines relating to the international transfer of weapons. The American continent made a significant contribution to this process with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

The conventional arms trade is also a source of constant concern in Ecuador. We must urge those States that possess the largest arsenals of these weapons to reduce significantly their production and stockpiles of conventional weapons. We believe that all States have the sovereign right to provide for their genuine defence needs but feel that the excessive accumulation of these weapons contributes to unchecked arms races, with the attendant dangers. This also creates major imbalances between countries of the same region, which always seems to work to the detriment of the smaller countries.

As regards the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, Ecuador, like many other developing countries, would like to express its pleasure that Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons entered into force on 30 July 1998. We welcome also the fact that Protocol II on landmines, booby traps and other devices entered into force on 3 December 1998.

In this respect, Ecuador fully supports the Ottawa Convention, whose speedy entry into force we welcome. We hope that it will soon become universal in nature. That instrument, whose ratification is being considered by our Congress, represents a strengthening and refining of the basic principles of international humanitarian law. It is of fundamental importance that there be international support for projects aimed at the deactivation of anti-personnel landmines. We believe that the international fund created for this purpose must receive significant contributions, especially from those countries that have produced or exported these weapons.

In this connection, I should like to point out that the Presidents of Ecuador and Peru, on 28 September 1998, asked the President of Brazil, as Coordinator of the Guarantor Countries of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, to lend his valuable cooperation to a plan to clear mines from an area that had been the site of a conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1995. The results of this request were positive, and concrete plans leading to mine clearance have been devised. This is a clear demonstration of the will of those two countries to implement the principles that underlie the Ottawa Convention.

Efforts relating to disarmament in all its aspects must be adequately supported by confidence- and security-building measures, which in turn means that a special effort should be made by all countries. In order to ensure that these measures are effective, it is crucial that positive negotiations be undertaken aimed at seeking solutions to existing problems and conflicts in certain regions and countries. We cannot expect progress in the field of disarmament if the conflicts that still divide countries are not moving towards satisfactory solutions. It is key, then, that the vital interests of the parties to conflicts be respected.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe that this will be an excellent opportunity to carry out a detailed review of all disarmament-related matters in order to decide on future action. The agenda for this special session must include items on conventional disarmament, the effective reduction of conventional forces and weapons, the relationship between disarmament and development, and confidence-building measures among States. We believe that the participation of all States is necessary, since this is an issue of the greatest importance for the maintenance of peace throughout the world.

Ecuador has expressed particular interest in joining the Conference on Disarmament. On this occasion, we would like to express our appreciation to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Erwin Hofer, for the efforts he made in the respective working group to facilitate the admission of the group of five countries: Ireland, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Ecuador. This was not achieved because of a lack of consensus. We believe that those five countries must coordinate their positions and efforts with the aim of pursuing the necessary consultations before the end of the current year so that the way can be cleared for the fulfilment of that aspiration at the first meeting of the Conference in January 1999.

Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election to his important post. I should also like to make my statement in Russian, in accordance with the many General Assembly resolutions on the equal treatment of the official languages.

The global interdependencies that make the world an indivisible entity highlight the problem of international security, peace and disarmament as the key prerequisites in ensuring solutions to a wide range of other major issues.

The epoch-making impact of the forthcoming turn of the century prompts us to make an in-depth analysis of the trends that have emerged and a comprehensive forecast of their eventual evolution. The only valid approach is to take due account of both the lessons learned from the past and the multidimensional environment in which we live, interact and meet the challenges that abound in today's troubled world.

The United Nations plays one of the key roles in the global disarmament process. We welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, whose first actions have received general approval. Many new initiatives have come about within the Organization to strengthen international peace and security, and we hope that their number will increase.

It is satisfying to note the long list of treaties and agreements concluded in recent years, providing clear proof that the gradual process of disarmament has become steady and progressive at the end of the twentieth century. The majority of Member States today have adopted policies whose focus is on measures to strengthen the non-proliferation regime for all types of weapons of mass destruction, to further reduce nuclear arsenals, to eliminate the stockpiles of chemical weapons and prohibit their production and to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the Biological Weapon Convention, thus implementing the provisions of the principal treaties and agreements in the field of disarmament.

One of the major objectives for all of us is to ensure a better and more secure world for all nations for the present and the future. Every time a conflict erupts or a crisis becomes imminent in some part of the world, the supply of arms and external interference — and sometimes foreign intervention — aggravate the situation. A booming trade in small arms, in particular, has been contributing to a world-wide culture of violence and to indiscriminate killing. Unfortunately, military intervention is in danger of becoming a frequent factor, to the detriment of existing positive political, diplomatic and economic approaches.

Belarus has traditionally advocated the peaceful resolution of crises wherever they occur, in the bilateral sphere and at the international level, with regard to global, regional or local issues. As for regional conflicts, I should like to draw the attention of the Committee to the latest statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus about the intent to resolve the crisis in Kosovo by force through a regional agreement. We believe that missiles are excellent in technological terms but truly negative politically.

It is clear that in almost all cases, economic growth is a factor that can help prevent conflicts. That should therefore be the way to deal with crises and to help countries. It is no coincidence that in these circumstances many countries recently have questioned the need to introduce outside intervention involving force to help settle crises, and that the issue of responsibility for the consequences is often raised.

For some time, Belarus has been putting forward the proposal to establish an international fund to assist countries whose economies have experienced disproportionately large burdens as a result of measures taken to liquidate conventional weapons. That idea has recently been echoed in the initiatives taken by a number of donor countries aimed at achieving disarmament. The idea has been put forward in many recent statements, and perhaps it will lead to the establishment of a global demilitarization fund. At this stage, it is sufficient to recall the fund that has been created to assist in demining and similar initiatives.

Belarus submits national data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on a regular basis and calls upon all countries to comply with their obligations to submit such information to the Register. More effective international control is required over the export of small arms, in particular to regions of conflict. The unrestricted export of such weapons to those regions leads to increased military confrontation and destabilizes the social and economic situation.

We are participants in the steadily evolving post-confrontation concept of security. That is a multidimensional process, encompassing all countries and regions. The key question is how we perceive the ways and means to ensure stability and security for ourselves and for our neighbours near and far. In today's interrelated world, with the almost unlimited possibilities of modern technology, we are all, in a sense, neighbours. Are we to rely on mutual deterrents or on mutual respect for each other's concerns and interests?

Every State has the inalienable and legitimate right to choose for itself those means of ensuring its national security that it perceives to be the most appropriate, including the right to enter into defence alliances. At the same time, while choosing those means, it is crucial not to lose sight of the self-evident axiom upon which rests the entire process of global stability and trust: the inadmissibility of one State bolstering its own security at the expense of others. The principle of not establishing new spheres of influence and dividing lines between States or their alliances should underlie relations among States.

Security is indivisible and can be relied upon only when the spirit of partnership — rather than political diktat, economic sanctions or the relapse to bloc politics and widening their geographic reach — becomes the sole basis for constructing international relations. Any student of European history will no doubt understand our concerns regarding the destabilizing effects of a potential expansion of the geographical boundaries of regional agreements.

Any new practical measure in arms control brings about new security realities and may positively influence the very approach to it. Constructing a reliable system of international security that would equally accommodate the concerns of all States very clearly requires agreed-upon international procedures, both with respect to verification of existing agreements and controlling developing situations with regard to new types of weapons of mass destruction to prevent their being produced and employed.

Together with its political and military components, the all-embracing security system of the twenty-first century should include economic, social, ecological and other dimensions. This theme has resounded with confidence in recent years in many international forums. Belarus, for its part, has been active in making practical contributions to all the components of that process in recent years with regard to both conventional and nuclear weapons. We have unequivocally demonstrated our will and readiness to play a pioneering role on the European continent in this respect.

Belarus has radically reduced its armaments, armed forces and military arsenals, strictly abiding by its international commitments in the framework of treaties and agreements. Our activities in this field cover a wide range of issues that are of priority concern to all Member States, from with small arms to nuclear weapons. Belarus is a member of the International Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, as you know, and our activities extend to the prevention of the development and production of new types of weapons of weapons of mass destruction, a matter on which Belarus has traditionally advocated, on a regular basis in the three-year cycle, the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly.

We have sought to foster the reform process and to rationalize and to adapt to present conditions all components of the existing international disarmament machinery. Belarus chaired the Disarmament Commission in 1998, and we did not want to make that a "backwards year".

As is well known, we banned from our territory tactical, then strategic, nuclear missiles. In view of the qualitatively new situation that has de facto emerged in Central and Eastern Europe, Belarus proposed establishing a nuclear-weapon-free space in the centre of Europe. Building upon the existing realities, the Republic of Belarus has been urging and continue to urge all States to support that initiative. We are convinced that its implementation would enhance security and mutual trust on the continent, foster geographical non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and be a major step forward in consolidating peace and stability, both in Europe and globally.

Europe, from whose territory nuclear weapons spread over the whole planet, has no moral right not to follow suit as other regions have done in making nuclear-weapon-free zones a reality. We now have an historic chance to build a new framework for a global security system. One of the main features of our initiative is the inclusion of the proposed space in the general European security structure. Through its practical actions to that end, Belarus seeks for Central and Eastern Europe an atmosphere cleansed, by the end of the cold war, of suspicions, opposing military blocs and the arms race, an atmosphere that would strengthen mutual understanding and trust among European nations, both today and in the century to come. We appreciate the ever-growing number of States that have been supportive of our endeavours.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones positively complements the global regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by prohibiting the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territories of other States included in those zones and circumscribing the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Incidentally, article VII of the NPT — to which most Member States are party — recognizes the right of any group of States to conclude regional agreements to preclude the presence of nuclear weapons on their territories.

In the light of the latest developments related to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones acquires particular prominence. A vivid confirmation of this was the adoption of six resolutions on related measures by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. In parallel with existing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin

America and Asia, regional initiatives have appeared whose potential is as yet far from clear. The response from the countries immediately concerned has so far been at best lukewarm. Given this fact, we are fully aware of how long and meticulously we must still work and we intend to continue along that path.

Given the circumstances, the issue of arms control is of particular importance, as it is the main instrument for ensuring peace and stability in all continents. One of the major issues — on whose development much will depend and which will determine the further development of the international security system in the next century — is the future of the European continent, which is very important to us.

There are still too many unresolved issues with regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We still have to do a great deal in order to move ahead in limiting conventional weapons and preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in various areas of the world.

The international community was seriously concerned over the development of events in South Asia last year. We therefore add our voice in support of the appeal to all countries to accede to the NPT and the CTBT.

Belarus supports the efforts of the international community to attain an agreed-upon approach to an international legally binding convention on guarantees for the non-nuclear States. We note the positive impact of the Security Council resolution. Unilateral statements by the nuclear States to the States parties to the NPT are of uncontestable importance in this regard.

Our country attaches great importance to international instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We strictly observe a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and neither produce or supply that type of weapon.

The problem of achieving complementarity in global disarmament efforts is having an increasing impact and requires the adaptation of previously concluded disarmament treaties and agreements, in particular the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as well as the provision of support to countries whose economies are disproportionately burdened by the work involved in the elimination of conventional weapons. In this regard, we believe there has been a dramatic increase in the importance of the environmental aspects of disarmament. As is well known, we have long supported the inclusion of premeditated acts that do serious harm to the environment in the proposed code of crimes against peace and security.

The Belarus delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We certainly recognize the full complexity of the issues related to the decision to hold that important session. Since that important event will undoubtedly affect the global political climate, consensus on all the well-known issues is of course required.

Progress on this issue was achieved at the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. In our view, the members came quite close to consensus. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to fully formalize this consensus. We hope that this question will be settled in the near future. Further, in establishing the agenda of SSOD IV, we should strike a balance between the issues involving conventional weapons and those involving nuclear weapons and should concentrate on international security problems, confidence-building measures and strengthening the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field as a whole.

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that there is agreement among Member States on the issues related to the convening of SSOD IV. Although a Working Group of the Disarmament Commission has spent three years on this subject, a mutually acceptable decision has not been reached. The most pressing issues are nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone zones, regional disarmament problems, measures for strengthening mutual trust and security, transparency in armaments and other issues. Our delegation is ready to continue consideration of these issues at the forthcoming 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus also notes its readiness to cooperate closely and constructively with the Chairman and with all other delegations so that the First Committee can prepare and adopt important decisions in the field of security and disarmament.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): On behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, I have the pleasure to make the joint ASEAN statement on arms control and disarmament issues.

> "The ASEAN member States recognize the fact that the positive conditions prevailing in the post-cold-

war era offer better opportunities as well as greater challenges for international efforts for arms control and disarmament. We are of the view that all States should take advantage of these positive conditions to produce concrete results in the field of arms control and disarmament.

"Reaffirming our commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament, the ASEAN member States call upon all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to undertake and bring to a conclusion negotiations on effective measures of nuclear disarmament, leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We reiterate our call for the commencement of multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons with a view to the total elimination of these weapons, within a specified time framework, through a nuclear-weapons convention. In this connection, we urge the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations in 1999 on such a phased programme of nuclear disarmament.

"Furthermore, we call for the convening of an international conference at an early date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on such a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, prohibiting the development, testing, production, acquisition, stockpiling, loan, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and providing for their destruction. In this context, we express our support for resolution 52/38 L, entitled 'Nuclear disarmament', submitted by Myanmar and other sponsors at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and the follow-up draft resolution submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

"We reaffirm our conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States in the regions concerned in various parts of the world constitutes an effective measure of preventing the geographic proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Bearing this in mind, we express our support for and encourage efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world.

"In this context, we reiterate the importance of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in enhancing peace, security and stability in the region. The Treaty entered into force on 27 March 1997. We welcome and note with satisfaction the ongoing consultations between the States parties to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States. We express our desire and hope that the nuclear-weapon States will sign and ratify the protocol at the earliest possible date. To this end, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to show their firm resolve and maximum flexibility to work together with us in a spirit of amity and cooperation to find solutions to the outstanding issues in the shortest possible time.

"We stress the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, and appreciate its contribution to the cause of nuclear arms control and disarmament as well as to the development of international law. In particular, we appreciate the ruling of the Court that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and its conclusion that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In this context, we express our support for resolution 52/38 O, entitled 'Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*', submitted by Malaysia and other sponsors at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and the follow-up draft resolution submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

"We recognize the importance of the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament. We fully support the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly the applications of Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand for Conference on Disarmament membership."

I should like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the First Committee.

Mr. Makubuya (Uganda): The Uganda delegation wishes to congratulate Mr. Mernier and other members of the Bureau on their election to guide the work of the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General

Assembly. I assure them of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The Charter of the United Nations states that one of the principal purposes of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security. Disarmament is, in this regard, crucial to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is for this reason that my delegation wishes to welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the able leadership of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala.

It is particularly important today that disarmament take a leading role in the work of the United Nations. The spectre of a nuclear arms race and its attendant dangers is once again an issue of major international concern, particularly in light of the recent nuclear tests in South Asia. As the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda said in his statement to the General Assembly during the general debate of its fifty-third plenary session on 1 October 1998:

> "The philosophy of dependence on nuclear weapons for security is, in a creeping and disturbing fashion, becoming universal. This situation is creating new dangers for the very survival of mankind." (*A/53/PV.23*, p.20)

The Uganda delegation therefore calls upon all States Members of the United Nations to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a first step towards the goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, so that humankind can live without the fear of self-destruction. In the same vein, we call for the total elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons.

The number of armed conflicts, particularly in the developing countries, is on the increase, leading to large numbers of deaths and disabilities and the loss of property. The majority of these new conflicts are intraterritorial, localized and of low intensity, making them especially difficult to control or even bring to the attention of the international community. These conflicts are kept going largely because of the availability of small arms, which are today responsible for most of the lives lost in armed conflicts. The level of proliferation of small arms is alarming and, unless concrete measures are adopted to regulate the production and transfer of small arms, our dreams of a world of peaceful coexistence will not be realized.

My delegation calls upon the international community to help control the movement of small arms and particularly to enforce arms embargoes on countries in which conflicts of the kind just mentioned occur. It is in this regard that my delegation welcomed the opening for signature in Ottawa last December of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Anti-personnel landmines are technologically easy to produce and cheap, and yet the destruction they cause, particularly to civilian non-combatants, is horrifying. The cost of clearing anti-personnel landmines, the destruction to human life and their impact on the livelihood of millions of people by rendering farm land unusable justify the ban. Uganda has signed the Ottawa Treaty and its ratification by Parliament is in the final stages.

In August this year, East Africa witnessed the savagery of terrorism when huge bombs exploded simultaneously at the American embassies in the capitals of our sister republics of Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda, too, suffered terrorist attacks in which three civilian public buses were bombed, leading to the loss of many innocent lives. Terrorism knows no borders and must, like the drug problem, be treated as a global problem. My delegation therefore calls for an international conference to exhaustively discuss the problem of terrorism and, in particular, to reach agreement on sanctions against countries which train, harbour and sponsor terrorists. It is through collective action that we can overcome this growing problem.

The Indian Ocean has, over the centuries, been central to the lives of people in three continents and indeed, since the fifteenth century, to the rest of the world. The Indian Ocean has been central to the trade, culture and movement of peoples in the regions which its waters touch. It is therefore important that, as this Ocean continues to play an important role in the way of life of humankind, it should be free from any confrontation that may endanger peace in the region. It is against this background that the Uganda delegation supports the call for the Indian Ocean to be declared a zone of peace. This will enhance the global economy and promote international peace and security. We call upon all countries to support our desire to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

Earlier this week, Uganda participated in an important International Conference in Brussels on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development, with particular reference to small arms and child soldiers. The Conference was a concerted effort by some Members of the United

Nations to respond to the fact that, despite the end of the cold war, the toll of human and material destruction in war-torn and conflict-prone areas is spiralling at such an alarming rate that development resources are increasingly being diverted to emergency relief and rehabilitation operations. In addition, there is an urgent need to address the problems of the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons, which have become the major weapons of internal and inter-State conflicts. The Uganda delegation would like to urge the General Assembly to give due consideration at this session to the Brussels Call for Action, which was adopted by the Conference on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development.

The international community's concerns about armed conflicts and insecurity were indeed one of the main reasons for the establishment of the United Nations. Over the years, we have expended a great deal of energy and resources in conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian aid. As we move towards the twenty-first century, it is imperative that greater resources, both human and material, be made available in efforts to prevent conflicts. The Uganda delegation therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (S/1998/318) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, in which he stressed that the prevention of war is today a matter of the defence of humanity. In the same vein, my delegation welcomed the establishment of the Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

It is the wish of my delegation that the United Nations should develop a proactive mechanism that is able to prevent disagreements over ideas and interests from becoming causes of armed conflict. This would require an active peace policy on the part of Member States and international organizations that is eclectic and that addresses the fundamental causes of conflict, many of which lie in the scarcity of resources arising from a lack of social and economic development.

Mr. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I congratulate Ambassador Mernier on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that his wisdom and wide experience will help us achieve success in our work. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish them all success.

The rapid changes on the international scene, the interdependent interests of States and the effects of these elements testify to the need to strengthen cooperation and solidarity in international relations. International security is indivisible. The course of peace is the only course that will lead the international community to a safe harbour. In the light of today's conditions and challenges, the end of the cold war showed clearly that world cooperation and solidarity can preclude actions that pose a threat to international peace and security; and disarmament figures prominently in international cooperation.

The proliferation of conventional weapons and the accelerating pace at which States vie to build up their arsenals give cause for concern. Here, international cooperation is needed to take steps to limit this phenomenon and to build confidence among nations, in the service of international peace and security. Perhaps the most important of such steps is support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, so that it can have the effect of reducing military expenditures, and so that States may divert the resultant savings to the development process in developing countries, especially in the light of present deteriorating economic conditions.

My delegation takes special interest in the matter of anti-personnel landmines, the effects of which are not limited to armies in wartime, but rather persist long after that stage. This poses a threat to the peace and security of peoples all over the world. The position of Kuwait, as enunciated in the General Assembly by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is the following:

> "In the area of disarmament, we welcome the progress made thus far with regard to the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.
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> "When we in Kuwait talk about landmines, we have in our minds the bitter memory of the destructive impact of the millions of mines planted throughout Kuwait by the invading Iraqi forces. Those mines claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent children, women and elderly people. It took painstaking efforts, in which many States participated, to remove those mines. Kuwait had to expend great efforts and vast sums on the clearance operations.

> "We therefore call on the international community to pursue its efforts to eliminate anti-personnel mines. Kuwait also encourages the movement towards curbing the arms race and developing controls and rules that contribute to tension reduction in all volatile and conflict-ridden regions, especially the Middle East, South Asia and the Indian subcontinent." (*A/53/PV.16, p. 17*)

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was a major step towards a priority disarmament goal of the international community. This reaffirms the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted on 11 May 1995 at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. As a signatory of the CTBT, Kuwait calls upon other States speedily to sign that Treaty and not to engage in any activities that run counter to the letter or the spirit of the Treaty.

All our countries share the common goal of turning the region of the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. But the way to that goal is blocked by Israel's refusal to respond to the wishes of the countries of the region and of the rest of the international community. Israel, moreover, refuses to accede to the NPT and to subject its nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. My delegation calls on the international community to pressure Israel to respond to the wishes of the international community and help create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which would spare the region from imminent danger.

My delegation does not confine itself to calling for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; it calls for the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, including chemical and biological weapons, and for the prohibition of the manufacture and export of fissile materials. This would ease tension in that vital region, which has long been subjected to many conflicts and threats, the most recent of which was Iraq's wanton invasion of Kuwait. Iraq continues to possess chemical and biological weapons, which it has used against its own people in northern Iraq. As the Secretary-General said in this Committee on 12 October 1998,

> "We know too that chemical weapons have been used extensively, notably against Iran and against civilians in northern Iraq in 1988. There too, 10 years later, the people of Halabja are still suffering the effects in the form of debilitating disease, birth deformities and aborted pregnancies." (*A/C.1/53/PV.3*)

Those who use these weapons against their own people will not hesitate to use them against their neighbours.

The Committee established under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) has affirmed that United Nations efforts are important for the security of the Gulf region and has welcomed Security Council resolution 1194 (1998) calling on Iraq to rescind its decision to suspend cooperation with the Special Commission and with the IAEA.

My delegation wishes to call on all States to accede to all disarmament treaties in order to free the world from these terrible weapons. Machinery should also be set up to monitor the import, transfer and manufacture of conventional weapons, whose flow is seemingly endless. Nor can I fail to mention that declarations and the signature of treaties are not enough in and of themselves; good faith is also required.

Mr. Boang (Botswana): Botswana has been a party to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for a considerable period of time now. Of late, we have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force for us on 30 September 1998. We are currently on course to finalize the process of signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). That notwithstanding, Botswana has already offered its well-equipped geological station for participation in the Treaty's monitoring system. This, in all fairness, is demonstrative of our commitment to the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

However, we are acutely aware of the need for further progress in this area, particularly as regards nuclear weapons. We have rightfully argued, and will continue to do so, that nuclear-weapon States have to show sufficient political will and commit themselves to the elimination of nuclear weapons. We are aware also that the elimination of nuclear weapons will not happen overnight. Such awareness, though, is often rendered mute by the nuclear-weapon States' attachment to the fundamental nature of those weapons to their defence doctrines. As has been stated earlier by other colleagues, possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent is inimical to the cause of their elimination.

Everyone, including nuclear-weapon States, knows what has to be done for there to be progress in nuclear disarmament. We believe that concrete progress on bilateral measures between the Russian Federation and the United States will go a long way towards steering us towards the right path in pursuit of Treaty objectives as far as the NPT is concerned. Furthermore, the delegation of Botswana supports calls for the de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. The end of the cold war has indeed offered ample opportunity to realize tangible progress in this regard, and we should not allow it to pass us by.

We welcome also the decisions of the Conference on Disarmament to establish ad hoc working groups on security assurances and the fissile material cut-off treaty. Non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly those party to the NPT, have contributed in no small measure not only to non-proliferation but to nuclear disarmament and as such deserve better than being perceived as potential "rogue States", to be kept in check with the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

After the conclusion of the CTBT, it is necessary to speedily commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. My delegation would like to urge members of the Conference on Disarmament to take the mandate from the General Assembly with the seriousness it deserves. Whenever we delegate the responsibility for negotiations to the Conference, we do so with the hope of receiving tangible results. It is still our hope that negotiations on an fissile material cut-off treaty will fully take into account the issue of existing stocks of fissile material. That treaty should fully prohibit the use of such stocks for further weapons development.

While fully cognizant of the various steps which could enhance momentum towards nuclear disarmament, my delegation will continue to support all efforts meant to bring us to the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. We will be ready, wherever possible, to co-sponsor draft resolutions on this subject.

Like other delegations, we share the expressed concern on the question of small arms. We were among the first to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Botswana welcomes the fortieth instrument of ratification of the Convention and is in the process of finalizing its own instrument of ratification. We would like to urge the international community to continue its support to the affected countries in mine clearance and rehabilitation of victims and economies. Furthermore, we would like to urge other United Nations Member States to seriously consider joining the overwhelming majority in banning the use of anti-personnel mines.

My delegation also welcomes and supports the offer by the sister Republic of Mozambique, a founding member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to hold the first meeting of States parties to the landmines Convention next year.

As regards the seemingly endless flow of light weapons, particularly to developing countries and areas afflicted by conflict, my delegation would like to point out another angle to this problem. It has become abundantly clear that the flow of light weapons, particularly to developing countries, is not only a result of States' demand for these devices for self-defence, but rather also a product of blinded conscience whose only concern is positive returns on this deadly commercial venture. International arms merchants, with acute and informed awareness of their countries' supposed ignorance, are indeed cause for concern. In some instances, international arms merchants have become the best salesmen any country could dream of in terms of marketing its products. This frightening and horrendous use of skill has even become the saving grace of some arms industries, accomplishing what the State could not. Even more perplexing is the fact that while States' apparatus appears able fully to record transactions later on, at the same time it is seemingly unable to recommend effective measures to stem the tide.

As for the Republic of Botswana, we will continue contributing to stemming the illicit flow of small arms by restricting the possession and use of weapons of war to those institutions that are charged with maintaining our national security. Anyone in our country with adequate curiosity or the desire to develop a career related to such devices is free to do so, but within the confines of our national security institutions.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election to steer the affairs of its Committee. I have no doubt that his rich experience and resourcefulness will prove beneficial to the Committee's work and help bring our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation assures him of its full cooperation.

As was noted by my President in his recent statement in plenary during the general debate, the end of the cold war has unleashed new threats to global and regional peace. Intra-State conflicts rooted in ethnic, racial and religious intolerance pose a threat to the security of many States and regions. Regrettably, these are compounded by the spectre of weapons of mass destruction and by the proliferation of conventional weapons. Article 24 of the Charter imposes on the Security Council primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, while Article 1 calls for effective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. But can we hope for peace in a world replete with arms? Can we hope for peace while the nuclear Powers adamantly cling to doctrines of nuclear deterrence and maintain their hold on their nuclear arsenals?

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to which most of our countries adhere, were clearly intended to prevent the proliferation or wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, as a first step towards the cessation of the arms race. They are not, therefore, an end in themselves, but a means to achieve an end, which is nuclear disarmament. It is therefore regrettable that not much progress has been made towards the goal of achieving general, unconditional and complete disarmament.

Our current experience has demonstrated that the threshold States, parties and non-parties to the NPT and CTBT alike, will not continue indefinitely to abide by the treaties, or to respect the consensus reached, while the nuclear "haves" continue to defy the calls of the international community to deliver on their commitments. The recent nuclear tests by two States Members of this Organization underscore the need for urgent measures to promote general and complete disarmament. We therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States once more to take initiatives or cooperate in the appropriate multilateral forums with regard to the institution of a programme of action for nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we renew our call for the early convening of an international conference on disarmament. If we were to fail in this, our earnest quest for nuclear non-proliferation would remain an illusory objective, to the detriment of global peace and security.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997 was enthusiastically welcomed by us all. We have all further pursued the laudable objective of strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction with credible verification measures that would make it more effective. If we are able to work together to prohibit the production and use of these weapons of mass destruction, we can do as much with nuclear weapons.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons also poses a serious threat to humankind. We all acknowledge the fact that conventional weapons are the ones most widely used in conflicts worldwide. A sizeable portion of all transfers of small arms and light weapons is illicit and is increasingly linked to other transnational criminal activities. They threaten security, exacerbate violence and human suffering and pose problems that hamper peace-building efforts after conflicts cease. Given the tremendous harm to lives and properties, it is a welcome development that the international community is now paying increasing attention to the search for ways to deal with them, while recognizing the legitimate requirements of sovereign States for self-defence. We endorse the guidelines for international arms transfers concluded in the Disarmament Commission in 1996, which should serve as a code for all States in arms transfers to ensure transparency.

My delegation also supports the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade, as reflected in resolution 52/38 J. In this connection, we welcome the proposal by Switzerland to host such a conference. We also welcome the initiative of the Oslo meeting on small arms, held on 13 and 14 July 1998, which sought to galvanize moves for an international agenda on small arms and light weapons and identify the elements of a common understanding. We encourage more efforts at global, regional, subregional and national levels to find practical solutions to the menace of small arms. In this regard, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has taken the initiative in preparing a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms. We commend ECOWAS for that.

We welcome the adoption last year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Ghana was among the large number of countries which signed the Convention in Ottawa last December, and it is in the process of ratifying it. We hope that, in the not-too-distant future, conditions will permit its universal adoption so as to enable us to rid our planet of these inhumane weapons, which continue to kill and maim innocent civilians long after the conflicts in which they are laid have ended.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's wholehearted endorsement of the Secretary-General's statement, issued in press release GA/9445 of 21 September 1998, on the need for us to rediscover the connection between peace and economic development. We can achieve global peace and security only if the needs of all, especially the poorest, are catered for. And this we can do if we spend on human development the resources that are spent on arms of all types, nuclear or conventional. That is our greatest insurance for durable peace.

Mr. Olusanmokun (Nigeria): My delegation would like to take this opportunity to convey to Mr. Mernier our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election as Chairman of this Committee during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We trust that under his leadership the work of the Committee will be steered to a successful conclusion. He can count on our support for the attainment of that goal. Our tribute also goes to the other members of the Bureau.

Regrettably, the end of the cold war has not brought the relief and the peace dividends expected. Conflicts stemming from ethnic, religious and cultural factors have swept through many parts of the world, consuming precious lives and property. There is therefore an urgent need for the international community to address the global security environment so that mankind can face squarely the formidable task of sustainable economic development.

Indeed, the most crucial issues facing the First Committee once again touch upon nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Recent developments in South Asia have brought into bold relief the compelling need to seriously embark on a credible, phased, time-bound programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is unfortunate that the South Asia development came upon the heels of the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My Government calls upon the countries involved to abide by the measures stipulated in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998). The international community should exercise more vigilance with a view to averting any further transfers of nuclear-weapon-related materials, equipment and technology to States. Nigeria, as a matter of policy, is opposed to nuclear-test explosions and is committed to the speedy attainment of a nuclear-free world.

It will be recalled that at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, held in New York in 1995, the States parties, both nuclear and non-nuclear, made some solemn commitments, *inter alia*: the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate aim of eliminating those weapons, and to consider taking further steps to assure non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, which could take the form of an internationally and legally binding agreement.

It would seem, regrettably, that some nuclear-weapon States have not lived up to these obligations. For instance, some nuclear-weapon States persist in their opposition to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

My Government is delighted by the decision of the Conference on Disarmament taken in August this year to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. It is our hope that this significant step in the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, following the CTBT, will be carried through to its logical conclusion. The commencement of negotiations early next year will signify the determination of the international community to press towards the goal of nuclear disarmament and its commitment to the outcomes of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Among the many benefits that a fissile material cut-off treaty is expected to produce is that all nuclear facilities capable of producing fissile materials for the production of nuclear weapons will be brought under legally binding international nuclear safeguards. By including both the nuclear- weapon States — as defined by the NPT — and non-NPT States, the perceived imbalance of rights and obligations between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States will be resolved. It will also bring about a security environment that will be conducive to the dismantling of nuclear arsenals and to the subsequent elimination of nuclear weapons by creating greater transparency and building confidence with regard to the capabilities and intentions of countries in possession of fissile material production facilities.

The legitimate demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States for a multilaterally negotiated agreement against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons has been outstanding since 1968, when it was made during the negotiations on the NPT. My Government is pleased by the re-establishment in the Conference on Disarmament this year of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. The

Committee, ably steered by Ambassador Antonio de Icaza of Mexico, has recorded some good work. These efforts should be intensified and reinforced in the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT review conferences and preparatory committees and other appropriate forums.

While arms control and disarmament have generally addressed nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, there is no doubt that small arms, and particularly anti-personnel landmines, have done much in recent times to damage human life and disrupt the orderly social and economic development of the affected countries. Even though it could not participate in the Ottawa process, Nigeria, as a country that upholds the basic principles of international humanitarian law, welcomes the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We reiterate our support for the objectives of that Convention.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a non-proliferation measure has become more or less universally accepted. There are currently four such zones created by legal instruments, namely, the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba. We envisage that a nuclear-weapon-free zone will become a reality in the Middle East, as well as in South Asia, considering the efforts being deployed towards that goal.

The scope of the existing zones is such that almost the entire southern hemisphere is covered. This fact probably inspired the 1996 initiative calling for cooperation among parties and signatories to the above treaties and for consolidation of the nuclear-weapon-free status of that region and adjacent areas. As a signatory to the Pelindaba Treaty, Nigeria shares the objectives of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the success of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We consider SSOD IV the appropriate forum not only for reviewing achievements made so far, but also for laying down the objectives and agenda to be pursued in the disarmament arena.

The Acting Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this afternoon.

I now call on the representative of Iraq, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Iraq has warned the international community and the United Nations many times over, through documented means, not to involve the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and its inspection teams in espionage and intelligence activities. Such activities are totally irrelevant to the implementation of Security Council resolutions. Rather, they serve hostile aims of Iraq's enemies.

The Scott Ritter scandal has once again confirmed beyond any doubt the truth of what we have warned against. It has also confirmed that the machinery of the Special Commission has been used in espionage activities against Iraq with a view to jeopardizing its security and sovereignty and keeping records of disarmament open indefinitely. The purpose of this has been to prolong the siege in the interest of the political goals of the United States of America and Israel.

We were therefore not surprised to hear the representative of Kuwait state that the efforts of the Special Commission are the cornerstone of the security and stability of his State.

The Acting Chairperson: I now call on the representative of Ukraine, who would like to make an announcement.

Mr. Shevchenko (Ukraine): I would like to inform the Committee that today the Parliament of Ukraine ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, with 285 votes in favour. Thus, Ukraine became the one hundred and twentieth State party to the Convention.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.